

The Atlantic

THE OTHER EDUCATION CRISIS / FICTION BY JOYCE CAROL OATES

THE WORLD IN ITS EXTREME

A
SAHARA
JOURNAL

TRAVELS THROUGH A
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SO DESOLATE, SO
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In this trackless place temperatures can reach 136°F. "Heavy traffic" means two trucks passing ten miles apart. A tourist about to die of thirst writes in a diary that she is glad to have come and would do it again. The place is the Sahara, the greatest desert in the world. Traveling through this wilderness, the author discovers an environment to which human beings have adapted with great ingenuity. He also finds countries that are brutal, xenophobic, and bankrupt, with little to unite them but Islamic fundamentalism and a desperate need for water.

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“ENCLOSED ARE TWO pieces on Algeria.” With those words, typed on plain white bond, William Langewiesche last year introduced himself to the editors of *The Atlantic Monthly*. The two pieces in question described various aspects of life in the Sahara, where Langewiesche had lived off and on for several years. The articles were powerfully evocative and written with unusual grace. Neither piece quite stood on its own, but we were drawn to the Sahara as a subject and to Langewiesche’s sensibility. On assignment for *The Atlantic* he went back to North Africa to gather material for a more ambitious piece of reporting, and the result is this month’s cover story.

“The World in Its Extreme” is the first article by Langewiesche to appear in a general-interest magazine. He has, however, written frequently for aviation magazines: he is a professional pilot. His father, Wolfgang Langewiesche, is famous among pilots as the author of *Stick and Rudder*, a classic treatise on the art of flying. William first sat at the controls of an airplane at the age of five. He worked as a pilot during his four years at Stanford University (from which he graduated in 1977, with a bachelor’s degree in

anthropology) and has made his living that way ever since, variously flying air taxis, air ambulances, cargo planes, and, most recently, corporate planes. Langewiesche has also been a flight instructor. His specialty is teaching other pilots how to fly in bad weather.



What drew Langewiesche to North Africa? “In part it was an interest in the desert, which I gained from years of flying in American deserts. For some reason I have a natural affinity for deserts. Perhaps partly it’s the large scale: in the desert I find myself spending a lot of time with my head up. And beyond that, I was curious about Islam and Islamic fundamentalism, and I was aware that a resurgence of fundamentalism was taking place in the Sahara. I had no preconceived notions about this, no idea whether it was good or bad. But I wanted to understand it.”

Some part of him, Langewiesche explains, has wanted to be a writer at least since college days. Some part of him will certainly be a writer during the months ahead. He has a new assignment from *The Atlantic*, and when he was last heard from, in the wilds of another desert, things were going well.

—THE EDITORS

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The November Almanac was compiled with the assistance of Gail Cleere, on behalf of the U.S. Naval Observatory, and Jodi Levin, of the Toy Manufacturers of America.



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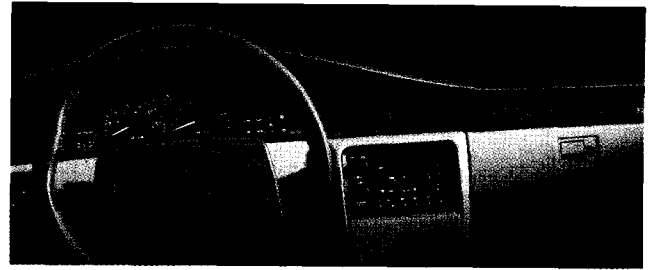
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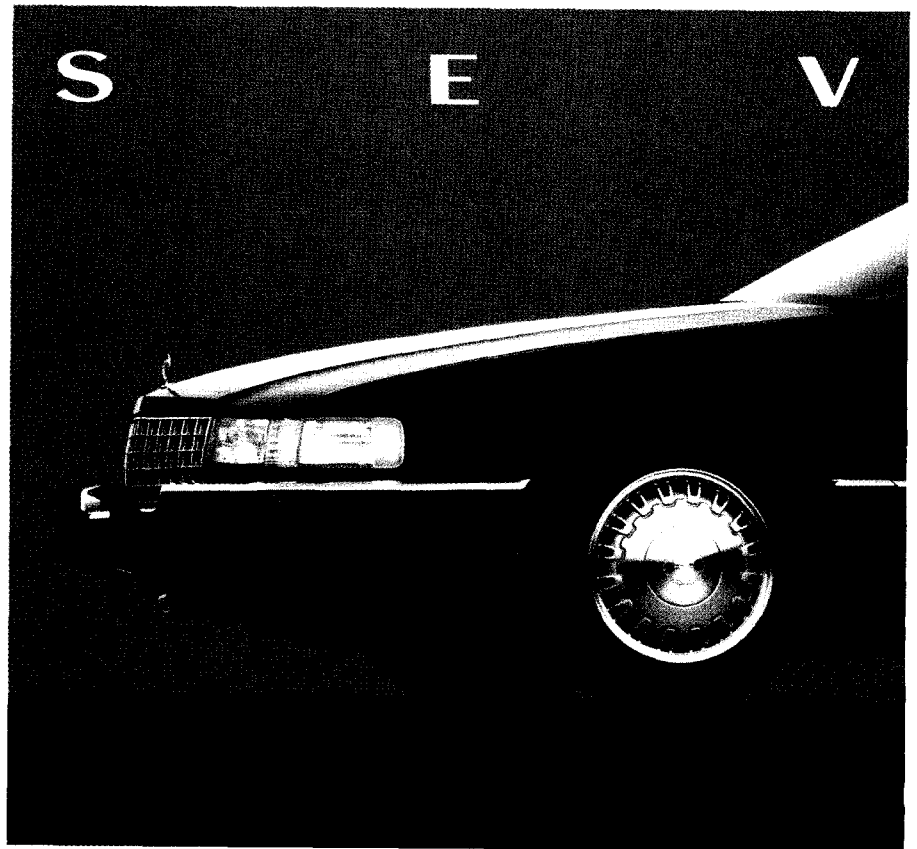
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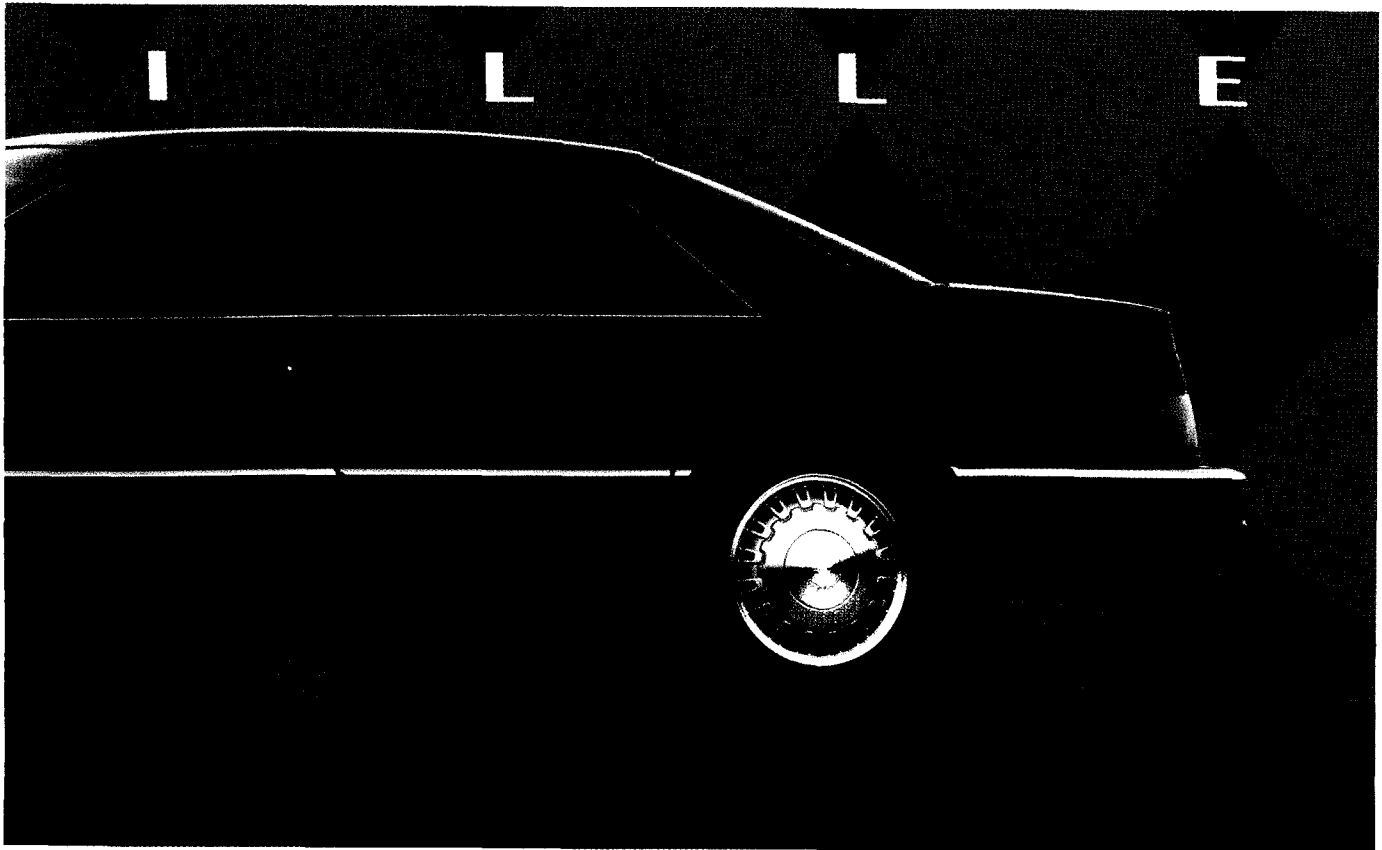
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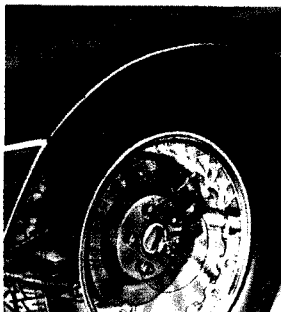
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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR



WAITING FOR THE WEEKEND

In "Waiting for the Weekend" (August *Atlantic*), Witold Rybczynski sees the seven-day week as a strongly entrenched institution that has every prospect for staying with us. "It is an observance that has been distilled over centuries of use, molded through common belief and ordinary usage."

Back in the 1970s an Argentinian astrophysicist asked the Ford Foundation for a grant to study the virtues of a nine-day week. His argument went approximately as follows:

- Historically, in various parts of the world at different times, weeks have ranged from five to ten days. This has been possible because the week is a man-made concept, unlike years and days, which are arranged by the movement of stars and planets (a point acknowledged by Rybczynski).
- The seven-day week has won out over other options, but because it is not divisible on an orderly basis, it is much less suited to the modern world than a nine-day week would be.
- In modern economies both manufacturing and service activities would be much more efficient if they operated every day, rather than being shut down for two days a week or else requiring expensive overtime pay. Full-time use makes the best use of capital expenditures on facilities and technology.
- With a nine-day week and full-time operation of the economy, the work force would rotate in three groups. Each would work for six days and then have a three-day weekend. Every three days a fresh group of workers would start their work period. Two thirds of the work force would be working at any given time, and the remaining third would be at leisure.
- For older people and part-time workers, it would be set up in three-day units and distributed to keep the work force balanced—a flexibility that the five-day work week doesn't afford.

This arrangement poses a few prob-

lems, but it also presents some appealing gains. Consider the following:

- Three days off out of nine gives slightly more opportunity for leisure than two out of seven. Each person would get a day off for each two days worked, rather than a day off for each two and a half days. Thus the available work would be spread among more people, reducing unemployment.
- Traffic jams would disappear with a third of the workers always on a weekend and avoiding the rush hours. Beaches and other recreational facilities would never be crowded, with two thirds always working. Access to golf courses would be tripled.
- Each group's three-day weekend would include a Sunday, so that priests, rabbis, and ministers would be busier and would have to enlist more people in their profession—a potential gain to civic morality.
- Schools would have room for additional students with a third of the present enrollment out of school every day. Children would be assigned to the same group as their parents to facilitate weekends together.
- Services that people need would always be available, not jammed into five days—legal advice, car repairs, medical attention, and so forth—and new opportunities in these realms would open up to aspiring candidates.
- These arrangements should appeal particularly to crowded areas, like the East Coast of the United States, and Los Angeles and environs. Once they get started, it will be hard for the rest of the country not to go along.

The Ford Foundation responded to the inquiry with a small grant for a study. The grantee came back with an analysis of the issues and a request for more money to launch a trial run in a Canadian township. The foundation bowed out at this point. Perhaps Rybczynski would like to pursue the matter.

HAROLD HOWE II

Past Vice-President, Ford Foundation
Concord, Mass.



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My boss, in giving me my last job evaluation, decided that I was unproductive, disorganized, and unable to communicate using oral or written language. He evidently hasn't seen me on weekends.

All the things I can't get done during the week, like laundry, lawn mowing, and letter writing, have to wait for the weekend. Since I work like a rat with a number on my back all week long, in the evenings I want only to come home and be with my family. What need could I ever have for a weekend at the tennis court or walking the links?

Given the way we are all dragged by our heels through the workweek, most of us acting out the dim-witted fantasies of bureaucratic statistic sycophants, the only bright spot in our otherwise mediocre lives has got to be the weekend. We work too hard the rest of the time not to look forward to the brief solace of stepping into the light of two days of our own design.

It may be an institution, but then, so is working in the garden.

NILS R. B. YOUNG
Medway, Ohio

In a thirteen-page article Witold Rybczynski allotted one sentence to what I consider a major influence on the activities of today's weekend: "Women have entered the work force . . . [and] housework still needs to be done. . . ." Regardless of gender division of household labor, since both parents in most families are employed, there is much to be done after the workweek is over. While I cannot speak for the poor, the rich, or singles with no children, I can say what *we* do on the weekend. We wash clothes, change the beds, clean house, make minor home repairs, maintain the cars, mow the lawn, and take our child to the dentist or to shop for shoes. To confirm that we're not alone, one need merely visit a major grocery store on Saturday morning. There the traffic is so heavy they've run out of grocery carts.

When I was a child, in the 1950s, my mother took care of these things during the week. Now, *if* we have the household chores all done by Sunday afternoon, my husband and I take turns entertaining our child while the other reads and grades papers we've brought home from our university teaching jobs. By Sunday night, though, we do nothing—just what the

weekend is for, right? It's because by then we're passed out on the couch, exhausted from all the fun we've had.

CINDY BURBACH
Wichita, Kans.

"Waiting for the Weekend" is a generally insightful piece of social history. It stops short, however, of discussing adequately two important and very obvious reasons that the weekend has achieved increased significance in today's society.

First, as a practical matter the weekend is the only time that many families can spend together. The workday in these hectic and financially difficult times stretches into most weekday evenings. Particularly in two-career families, the ideal of the family's dining and spending the evening together is often lost. Without the weekend, therefore, families would continue to spin in divergent directions with no time together, much less the often-discussed "quality time."

Second, Witold Rybczynski obscures the role of organized religion in elevating the significance of the weekend. Several of the major religions revolve around a day of observance and abstention from work at the end of each week. The Sabbath day provides a crucial break in a week of unrelenting work.

SAMUEL WITTEN
Chevy Chase, Md.

Witold Rybczynski points out that Americans have professionalized their leisure activities, shunting aside the more relaxing idleness and dabbling. A corollary to this thesis exists in the super-regimentation of our children's lives. What was sporadic sandlot ballplaying became organized, scheduled Little League games. Playing at dancing or exercises became ballet or gymnastic lessons. Splashing around in the water became membership on swim teams. Playing "dress-up" became drama classes. Reading for pleasure became school and library reading competitions.

Free time is an idea whose time has come—again.

NANCY RIGGAN
Orange City, Iowa

The "mystery" of the origin of the week is one entirely manufactured by secularism. The division of time

into weeks, and the reservation of one seventh of time as a memorial of Creation, was "remembered" by the Jews, but not originated by them. Moses wrote, "Remember the seventh day. . . ." (Exodus 20:8), referring Jews to a tradition much more ancient than Abraham and his descendants.

Jesus taught that the week and its Sabbath originated at the beginning of history and are a universal, not a Jewish, institution. "The Sabbath was made for man. . . ." (Mark 2:27).

The origin of the week and its universality is evidence of Creation, observed by all races unwittingly, and celebrated every seventh day by millions of us gratefully.

JOHN B. HOEHN, M.D.
Walla Walla, Wash.

Witold Rybczynski replies:

The nine-day week mentioned by Harold Howe recalls another "improvement" to the week, proposed by Joseph Stalin's regime in 1929, and for reasons much like those Howe cites. This version likewise entailed substituting staggered work shifts (four days on, one day off) for universal free time; it proved so inefficient—and so unpopular—that it lasted less than two years.

Cindy Burbach makes a valid point: the weekend can be as much an opportunity for housework as for leisure.

I agree with Samuel Witten that the weekend has achieved an added importance in two-career families, and I wish I had thought of Nancy Riggan's perceptive observation that we reinforce our attitude toward recreation by passing it on to our children.

The seven-day week may or may not have originated at the beginning of history, as John Hoehn suggests, but there is no evidence that it was a universal custom. None of the ancient civilizations, except perhaps the Babylonians, observed anything like a seven-day week prior to the Jews. The Egyptians and the Athenians both divided the month into three periods of ten days; the calends, nones, and ides divided the Roman month into three unequal intervals. Nor did the week emerge elsewhere. The Chinese calendar had a recurring cycle, but it was sixty days long; the Mayan civil calendar included succeeding thirteen-day periods. Hence the "mystery" of the origin of the seven-day week, an unlikely mixture of Jewish custom, pagan



planetary belief, Mithraic doctrine, superstition, and lastly—but only lastly—Christian credo.

MILITARY EFFICIENCY

By suggesting that politicians look to the military as an enlightened institution, James Fallows ("Military Efficiency," August *Atlantic*) bypasses both the link that already exists between the government and the military and the possibility that things are the way they are out of mutual convenience. The military is the main muscle of our muscle-flexing government, and its policies must thus be examined in the light of the government's civil-rights failings elsewhere. The "coping" Fallows refers to consists not of vision but of expedience and exploitation. Black Americans should be questioning why they are finding such opportunity in the military. And why, if women should be unenthusiastic about their role in the military, shouldn't blacks be unenthusiastic?

The high proportion of blacks in the military was cause for reflection and protest during the latest war. The plight of the black male population is well known and little bothered with. Many young black men are out of work, in jail, or in the military. The military is a nice way to keep them out of medicine, the arts, and—most notably and tellingly—the government. It is not just "bad" that there are no blacks in the Senate—it is disgraceful, and reflective of America's abiding elitism. How many well-provided-for whites choose the military? Not many, because they still have alternatives.

During the Gulf War the military's recruiting efforts in Ithaca, New York, were concentrated in poor black neighborhoods. In a population where despair and poverty run high, people are vulnerable to the military's offers. And military brochures are filled with the glorification and anesthetizing and machismo of war. In carefully arranged photographs, soldiers look fearless, as bloodless as GI dolls. The military offers an opportunity, yes, but it is a deceptively glorious and potentially lethal one.

of the men who now wander homeless—intoxicated and sleeping on our streets. Veterans make up almost 50 percent of all homeless males in many of our cities.

The collective good of the military serves the collective potential in all of us for ignoring the needs of the oppressed, the poor, the young, the ill, the disenfranchised. The recent approval by the Senate Armed Services Committee of an antiballistic-missile system is proof once again that our politicians are most fervent and

imaginative when it comes to high military technology. They are busy chasing possible threats rather than the existing threats that can be found in our inner cities, our health-care system, and our schools.

The irony of looking to the military as a role model is one Fallows mentions but pays scant attention to. There are more reasons against emulating the military than there are reasons for, just as there are better examples of acting in collective agreement than thousands of soldiers' dropping bombs at the command of General Norman Schwarzkopf. And if we're to note

where blacks, women, the habitually underprivileged, are, we are obligated to look at where they aren't—and in both cases to ask why.

ELLEN GRIMM
New York, N.Y.

Had James Fallows given the slightest indication of irony in his paean to the military, I would have taken his piece as a kind of Swiftian "modest proposal." The suggestion that we take the military, in some of its aspects, as a model for American society

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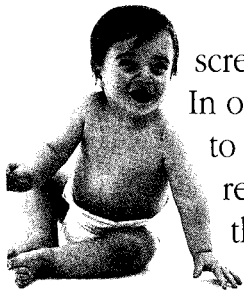
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The suggestion that the "modern army spends very little time dying" is hardly consoling. Any time dying is unacceptable. And what about the rest of the time—time spent preparing for war and time spent killing (a little-used word in this age of "collateral damage")? Are we to be comforted that U.S. soldiers spent more time killing than dying in the Gulf War? And wars are both more recent and more possible than we like to admit. Possible wars exist, and our past wars have led to the psychological collapse of many

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is particularly horrifying given the flag-worshipping cult of militarism that became so prominent in our national life as a result of our adventure in the Persian Gulf.

I will grant that our country has often been shaped by the doctrine of defense. This doctrine has maintained involuntary servitude, in the form of a draft; it has stifled the free expression of opinion by nonconformists like Eugene V. Debs, the Jehovah's Witnesses, victims of the Smith Act, and thousands more; it has provided the ideological basis of post-Second World War military-industrial corporatism. However, the United States is still one of the less regimented countries in the modern world. This is owing in part to the undercurrent of anti-militarism in American history and in part to the survival of the principle of "inalienable rights" expressed in the Declaration of Independence and the Bill of Rights. Fundamental to this principle is the belief that in a free society individuals' rights can't take second place to anything.

Huey Long was once asked if we would ever have fascism in this country. Yes, he answered, but we'll call it something else. Maybe we'll just call it "military efficiency."

CARL L. BANKSTON III
Baton Rouge, La.

The military does have its efficiencies, but it has more than James Fallows notes, and they are of greater significance in our age of high-technology industry and low-technology teaching.

The military takes the less scholastic part of the population (half of whom have an IQ less than 103) and teaches them to handle complex, sophisticated, and dangerous weapons. Could not industry and high school, in training the whole population, benefit from the military's success?

Could we overcome stereotypes and special interests and hire retiring non-commissioned officers (who do so much of the training in the military) as teachers?

R. S. EISENBERG
Chicago, Ill.

James Fallows's article on military efficiency is interesting reading, especially in a time when crucial budget decisions are being made about the allocation of scarce resources, but his premise needs embellishment. Fal-

lows's use of historical examples as entree to the statement that "the military, strangely, is the one government institution that has been assigned the legitimacy to act on its notion of the collective good" ignores the rich history—at least until its 1971 reorganization—of the U.S. Post Office. Fallows cites education, equal opportunity, the fostering of industry, cartography, geology, interstate commerce (highways), and the invention of Tang as the military's indirect achievements; similar accomplishments could be credited to the Post Office.

The Post Office subsidized stagecoaches and the building of post roads, canals, and railroads. Samuel Morse was working for the Post Office when he developed the telegraph, an invention that Congress decided to privatize over Morse's objections, though he benefited financially. Benjamin Franklin, the nation's first Postmaster, was an educator for the polity, as he established the policy of carrying newspapers without charge (and canceled the mail with "Be Free. Franklin").

The Post Office developed rural free

delivery, which helped bring farmers into the mainstream national economy in the 1890s. Catalog-shopping giants such as Sears and J. C. Penney depended on the Post Office for their success. And the development of air travel was helped significantly by Post Office subsidization of airlines carrying the U.S. mail. Furthermore, the Post Office has been the center of small-town life throughout our history, testimony to which is found even today when small-town post offices are closed or relocated. Plainly, the U.S. Post Office revealed all the positive traits ascribed to the military while also evincing negative traits. Yet in pursuit of the constructive role the Post Office filled, its "enemies" remained rain and sleet and snow (and, more recently, the bureaucratic inefficiencies and patronage that politicians of the modern era could not correct).

ELLIOT VITTES
Orlando, Fla.

"Military Efficiency" is perhaps timely with the likely closing of many military bases nationwide, as-

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sociated unemployment, and the reduction of defense budgets. James Fallows's compliments to the services will be well received by those communities that are losing bases, and also by the increasing number of veterans and veterans' organizations.

The space program, modern electronic communication, Loran and GPS, are all domestic benefits derived from forty years of being considered as Russia's main adversary. And, of course, the new technologies spurred new industry that still operates on relatively long-term contracts employing many civilians. Also, regarding social progress in the services, Fallows is accurate in his commendation.

Yet the military has profited in these forty years. Practically every government agency carries a military aura. The real question is, Does democracy need regimentation, authoritarianism, secrecy, to survive? Do we need military discipline, command, and response to assure freedom? Do we need uniforms, medals, parades, and all the hyped-up patriotism to make our society succeed? Do we need war in the Persian Gulf to show that our defense is still alive and viable, or do we pursue such an effort to keep the military well budgeted and the politicians in office, and to justify the deficit?

ROBERT A. STUART
Spring Hill, Fla.

HEALTHY COMPETITION

Regina Herzlinger's logic in "Healthy Competition" (August *Atlantic*) escapes me in two ways. First, how does she reconcile her condemnation of hospitals' duplicating expensive technologies with her recommendation for competition among hospitals?

Second, how will allowing consumers to choose their insurers solve a problem with health-care providers? It might even make the problem worse, by limiting consumers' choices (to endorsed hospitals or to levels of reimbursement) rather than expanding them. Consumers would have to shop for insurance companies rather than for the providers directly, and would have a hard time evaluating the effectiveness of the pool of providers available under each policy. (Would a policy with a reimbursement cap of \$3,000 lead to health care as good as that pro-

vided by a policy with a \$4,000 cap for the same procedure?) The article doesn't clearly show me how consumers' ability to shop for insurers would lead to improved choice of health-care providers by those consumers. In fact, it suggests that consumers would have to surrender their freedom to choose to a selected insurance company, which would then vet the providers for them.

We certainly need cost control in the health-care industry, and any possible solution deserves consideration. I do wish, however, that Herzlinger had clarified these points in her argument.

MARICE BEZDEK
Chatham, Pa.

Using competition to reduce health-care costs, as Regina Herzlinger proposes, certainly seems practical. But I object to expanding their deductibility. Our nation's experience is that what the government subsidizes, through either funding or tax preference, tends to prosper and grow. We are too far in debt to reduce income taxes further by allowing health-care costs or prevention costs to be deductible.

BERT SCHIRESON
Denver, Colo.

Regina Herzlinger, in attacking the Canadian model, cited "one study" that she said claimed that \$339 billion in new taxes would be needed to finance a system on the Canadian model. But in return for higher taxes, workers, businesses, and consumers would cease having to pay hundreds of billions in direct outlays for health care and insurance, so higher taxes could be a good trade. Moreover, she said nothing about a June 4 report from the General Accounting Office—purportedly a nonpartisan center for analytical work—which said that immediate conversion to a Canadian-style system would result in universal insurance coverage and first-year net savings to society overall of several billion dollars, with increased savings in subsequent years. Although the report wasn't released early enough, I suspect, to mention in an August issue, its findings were available much earlier to anyone working in the field.

Herzlinger observed that Canadian health costs are currently inflating faster than those in the United States, but she failed to mention that overall inflation—including wage and price infla-

tion—is also higher in Canada than in the United States, making her point irrelevant.

Finally, and most grievously from the point of view of journalistic standards, Herzlinger and *The Atlantic* failed to note in her biographical material a serious potential conflict of interest: namely that Herzlinger is a founder and co-owner (with her husband) of the Belmont Instrument Corp., which, according to a profile of her in the *Harvard Business Review*, "designs and manufactures balloon pumps and other computer activated cardiac-assist devices." It seems to me that readers have a right to know that the author of an article attacking national health care and calling for more competition and free enterprise is herself a part of what has been called the medical-industrial complex.

DAVE LINDORFF
Spencer, N.Y.

"Healthy Competition" offered many valid and interesting proposals to improve our health-care system. Conspicuously missing, however, was an explanation of how "Insurers would . . . be prohibited from reducing risks by discriminating against sick people." Implementing the cost-effective system outlined in the article would require changes in the insurance industry every bit as sweeping as those proposed for health-care providers. You can bet that insurance companies would unite to fight any such legislation with all the savagery that the American Medical Association brought to bear against Medicare in the 1960s.

The article aimed scorn at uninsured middle-income workers. My husband and I, both in our thirties and earning healthy salaries, must take medication for chronic conditions; consequently, no private insurer will touch us. We depend on our employment by government institutions for adequate coverage. We would be happy to shop around and quite willing to pay our fair share. Expecting insurance companies to submit to being coerced into accepting us is like asking Chrysler to welcome Hyundai with open arms.

JANICE ZIEMER
Chicago, Ill.

Regina Herzlinger dismisses health-maintenance organizations because "Americans in general do not favor



them." But competition among HMOs in Massachusetts controls costs, and the HMOs provide excellent health care and physical checkups; run stop-smoking and other health programs; manage diabetes problems; and offer cancer support groups, asthma education, AIDS support groups, alcohol and drug education, allergy education, stress management, cholesterol education, weight-loss programs, breast-feeding classes, preparation for pregnancy, and dozens of other programs.

The HMO to which my wife and I belong has a contract with an outstanding hospital (Brigham and Women's) and with several specialized institutions, including the Massachusetts Eye and Ear Infirmary (where our youngest son had a deviated septum corrected some years ago).

HMOs are cost-effective (less expensive than Blue Cross-Blue Shield), eliminate costly paperwork, cover physical checkups, and provide programs at a nominal cost to help people stay healthy. They have evening hours for the benefit of those who work during the day, and they cover emergency care or hospitalization when members are far from home.

Regina Herzlinger is on target when she says that the present system is unworkable and inequitable, and that competition is the way to go. HMOs can solve the problem.

WARREN HIMMELBERGER
Wellesley Hills, Mass.

Regina Herzlinger's article on health-care competition is right on target. It should be required reading for every person in a position to create policy related to the crisis in American medical care. Our present difficulties (excessive costs, inefficient allocation of resources, concerns about quality) are classic symptoms of market failure. They will not be corrected unless we instill some market sense and discipline into the system.

Herzlinger's suggestion that consumers of medical care be empowered to make choices for themselves is the only sensible solution to our present predicament. It is the only way to lower costs without reducing freedom of choice. National health insurance is touted primarily by those bureaucrats, politicians, and professional "experts" who stand to gain the most from its enactment. We should learn from the

sorry experience of socialist nations around the world and resist this next step into collectivism. After all, government-mandated universal health coverage was touted by Marx, and enacted by Lenin and Hitler. The lesson of the twentieth century is that a market economy is essential not only to prosperity but to political liberty as well. We should apply this lesson to the medical marketplace.

MURRAY S. FELDSTEIN, M.D.
Flagstaff, Ariz.

National health insurance could endanger "the world-class research, free choice, and abundance of top-quality providers that are the hallmarks of our system," Regina Herzlinger says. Perhaps choice among quality providers is the experience of the wealthy living in major U.S. population centers. Our experience as parents in smaller towns of the United States for two decades was expensive care poorly provided, the choice being between an elderly doctor and a new graduate. Our experience in Canada for more than two decades has been excellent care by

the doctor or specialist of our choice, provided free of charge under national health insurance.

J. McREE ELROD
Victoria, B.C.

When Regina Herzlinger cited the Federal Employee Health Benefits Program as an example of where employees make "intelligent" decisions about health care, I knew she was overdosing on competition compulsion. According to a 1988 consulting study, the FEHBP is one of the most inefficient, costly, confusing, and wasteful insurance programs in the nation. Even the U.S. Office of Personnel Management, which oversees the program, acknowledges that the proliferation of insurance programs contributes to the problems. The FEHBP is roundly criticized by most experts in government. The debate in Congress is not whether the FEHBP will be changed but how.

Herzlinger fails to mention that the cost of administering the health plans provided by the 1,500 or so health insurers in this country already accounts

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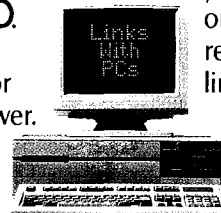
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for one out of every five dollars spent on care. Simply eliminating this waste would generate enough funds to provide health care for the uninsured. And after the S&L and BCCI scandals, I seriously question the ability of the insurance regulators under Herzlinger's plan to protect me from abuses by the health-insurance companies.

MICHAEL GRACE
Brinklow, Md.

Selecting health care is not like buying a car. I own a Honda Accord, but if I chose anything less than Cadillac health care for my family, I would be accused of being cheap, uncaring, and willing to risk their health for the sake of saving a few dollars.

JAMES S. LARSON
Little Rock, Ark.

Regina Herzlinger fails to address one important issue. In addition to the large working population who are insured and the 37 million or so who are uninsured, there are the 35 million or so with "reverse insurance"—that is, the Medicare population. Designed as a mechanism to insure the elderly, Medicare was so loosely conceived and administered that it encouraged creative accounting, entrepreneurship, and technological abandon. But now its archaic rates and its prohibitions on self-pay effectively outlaw primary care for those unfortunate enough to have passed their sixty-fifth birthday. Certainly in any reorganization of the system Medicare will need enthusiastic renovation: here, too, the affluent must pay something and the needy must be better sponsored.

WILLIAM C. WATERS, III, M.D.
Atlanta, Ga.

Regina Herzlinger replies:

The consumer-controlled health plan described in my article will enable Americans to buy the health-care services they want—including those for health promotion, long-term care, and chronic health problems—without bankrupting themselves or the U.S. economy. Because it preserves physicians' autonomy, it supports high-quality care. It also provides coverage for those who are uninsured for economic reasons, with tax subsidies and direct government payments, and for those high-risk individuals who currently cannot obtain any insurance.

Dave Lindorff and J. McRee Elrod ignore several facts in their assessment of the Canadian health-care system. Residents of rural Canada, like many Americans, suffer from lack of access to health care; even a socialized system cannot force physicians to locate in rural areas. And the Canadian system is hardly "free of charge." Canadians pay hefty taxes to support it. The real rate of Canadian health-care cost increases, like the rate in the United States (after adjustment for inflation), exceeds the rates in major European systems. (An aside to Lindorff: my article's condemnation of the present proliferation of medical technology is directly antithetical to the interests of its suppliers.)

As for HMOs, Warren Himmelberger and I most likely belong to the same one. I, too, value its services. But most Americans reject HMOs. After years of heavy promotion, they have been chosen by only 14.6 percent. And HMOs are not the money-savers he portrays. Data from the Health Insurance Association of America show that HMO premiums are roughly equal to those of other forms of health insurance.

Several other letter writers worry that my plan does not sufficiently protect unlettered consumers or control self-interested insurance companies. In reality the U.S. consumer is more knowledgeable about health care today than ever before. For example, contrary to Michael Grace's assertion, many federal employees intelligently selected from among a host of health-insurance plans. The failure was not theirs but rather that of the government, which ineptly intervened and subsidized inefficient companies. The government that bungled the regulation of savings-and-loans and banks is, ironically, the one that Grace would entrust with running the entire health-care system.

THE BLACK LEGEND

"The Black Legend," by David Ewing Duncan (*August Atlantic*), having begged us not to engage in thoughtless Spain-bashing, glosses over the terrible losses suffered through the centuries from the domi-

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nation by the Catholic Church of the Hispanic peoples and the lands they colonized. I have no prejudice against believers in Catholicism, but as an institution the Catholic Church has stomped heavily on and until relatively lately crushed all the sciences save apparently heresy-free mathematics. And in mathematics, Spain's greatest gift to the West was to permit Islamic scholars to pass on to Europe their great mathematical works and translations of classics of ancient science—before hounding them out of Spain.

If one draws a line, roughly east-west around the world, dividing the world into Catholic and non-Catholic (Lutheran, Jewish, Islamic, Hindu, and other) domains, one finds after the suppression of Galileo almost no scientific leadership or greatness in the areas in which original thought was forbidden by Catholic thinkers: Spain, Mexico, all the Catholic-dominated lands south to Tierra del Fuego, and the Philippines.

The greatest non-Catholic physicists, chemists, botanists, mathematicians, and engineers made their great contributions *in the North* from the sixteenth century on. Gutenberg would never have been allowed to print in a Catholic country. Newton and Leibnitz would have been given the Galileo treatment, and Einstein would have been placed under house arrest for daring to think anything not invented in Rome. The brave French seem to have overcome or outwitted most Catholic repression of thought, but my focus, following Duncan's line, is on the Hispanic Catholic world.

The reactionary revisionists now tell us that the world would have been better off if Columbus had not led the Europeans to North America. We could have done very nicely without cocoa, chili and paprika, tomatoes and potatoes, corn, amaranth, quinine, tequila, tobacco, and syphilis—to name a fraction of New World imports to flat-earth Europe. The Catholics appear to have let Columbus go in the hope of finding new converts to send to Heaven—or perhaps hoping he would fall off the earth.

If Catholic thought had prevailed into our times and altitudes, the space program would have been anathemized for flinging machines into God's heavens, just as Galileo was squashed for daring to investigate topics not pro-

mulgated by a pope, for questioning the perfection of the universe.

Spain and some other Hispanic Catholic countries seem well on the way to overcoming the age-old Catholic repression of science and original thought, as Duncan points out. But recovery from centuries of repression takes time. Finally, why is it that most of the greatest breakthroughs in the sciences and technology have taken place in the non-Catholic regions of the Northern Hemisphere? Does a cooler climate prompt more productive scientific thought? Duncan tiptoes gently all around the central institutional causes for the contempt for Spain which he so rightly tells us we should let slide into the past.

JOHN CAFFREY
Scottsdale, Ariz.

The reputation of Spaniards for ruthlessness and cruelty lives on in fact. I recently saw the ritualized torture to death of six bulls in a Madrid bullring. Where else does such public enjoyment of cruelty take place? If Spain wishes to subdue the Black Legend, it

could eliminate bullfights during the 1992 Olympics in Barcelona and the World's Fair in Seville.

FRANK V. WILBY
Los Angeles, Calif.

David Ewing Duncan replies:

Clearly, the Black Legend remains alive and well, though John Caffrey seems to have based his opinion more on a selective view of history than on any animosity toward Catholics and Spanish-speaking peoples. Mr. Caffrey's suggestion that warm climates act to stymie intellectual thought ignores 5,000 years of history, from ancient Egypt to the Mayans. Without the contributions of warm-climate thinkers, including Catholics such as Leonardo da Vinci and Petrarch, the "modern world view" might never have developed.

As for the bullfight, I find it odd that my Spanish friends continue to defend this anachronistic slaughter, particularly when the bullrings these days seem crowded with tourists as much as with Spaniards—including a large number of Americans and Japanese.

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ON RAYMOND CARVER

Russell Banks makes a curious comment near the end of his essay "Raymond Carver: Our Stephen Crane" (August *Atlantic*). He says, "Literature, all art that matters, makes it possible for us to bear witness to each other's life and death, enabling us thereby to enter history, where we gain dignity and live on. It's a pure gift, one to the other."

The idea that one must "enter history" in order to gain dignity is a simple confusion of cause and effect, an illusion that journalists have frequently employed to great effect. History as a field of study or a discipline can do much to illuminate the facts of human existence. But "history" as an abstraction, as a repository for all human activity, serves only the little hopes and fears of those lost in it. One "makes" history today in a fashion remarkably similar to how one previously would "earn" one's way to heaven—another illusion.

If Banks intended to make Raymond Carver into a dignitary in the pantheon of literature, he has done well. I have yet to comprehend how "history" confers on anyone a dignity more important than the anonymous dignity everyone must choose in order to live out his life. If, however, Banks is going to write aphorisms on art, I suggest that he look to those places where one can learn most about the personal views of artists: the aphorisms of Nietzsche, the letters of Van Gogh, the marginalia of Blake, and many others. There a simple fact becomes clear: Art is but the best gift that great souls confer upon *themselves*. "History" comes afterward.

ROBERT MCCALL
Bekwood, N.C.

Enough already! Since Raymond Carver's death he has been lauded and praised to such an extent that disinterested observers must think we have seen the passing of a great writer, a giant, a literary genius, an American Shakespeare or Tolstoy. The article by Russell Banks in your August issue continues that effusive stampede. To sit down and read Carver's work, however, is to discover merely a good story writer who wrote spare tales about simple situations, a writer no better or worse than at least a dozen skilled

short-story writers practicing the form today.

His best, least-contrived stories, like "Elephant," are competently written. But come on! There is nothing particularly deep or profound in this story. A middle-aged man allows himself to be taken financial advantage of by relatives. At the end of the story, apparently because his problems are beginning to burden him, he and a friend drive a car a bit fast, finding some kind of childlike thrill in this, as adolescents who have just received their driver's licenses will, and the story ends. That's it. That's all, folks. Not quite another *Hamlet*. In fact, compare this story with a similar one—say, Bellow's "Seize the Day"—and Carver comes out second best. Not very impressive for such a genius. Bellow's ending is a catharsis. Carver's ending is *supposed* to be a catharsis. But "Elephant" is not a bad story.

The famous "Errand"? Here is a story that cannot stand on its own two feet as a story. Its references are outside itself. It has special meaning to that coterie of Chekhov groupies currently hanging out in college English departments. The emotion conveyed is conveyed because these readers are already familiar with the character of Chekhov and have an affection for his stories. Their affection for him and his work is transferred to Carver's story. None of the affection comes out of the story.

To read Carver's earlier stories is to be amazed at the plaudits now coming down from everywhere in the literary community. He probably wrote more trivial junk than any writer ever has; in his minimalist phase he went beyond the simple into the simpleminded—Dr. Suess-style writing that could be expected to impress a first-grader but not a thinking, worldly adult. Yes, I know, fans say the stories have blank spaces that echo with meaning. The fans use academic jargon to project philosophical ideas from their own heads onto a flimsy construction. The fans avoid the inconvenient truth that blank spaces are just blank spaces. Literati can gush and ooh and ah and splutter in vague terms about how good the stories are. But if the meaning cannot be put coherently into words (except to say that the meaning of life is its meaninglessness, or other nonsense), no meaning is there.

Russell Banks says that Carver "wrote from outside and deliberately against bourgeois taste and attitude." Banks is wrong. Who does he think these people are who are coming out of the woodwork to praise Carver? And who does he think were most influenced by Carver in the Reagan decade of the eighties but that whole trite parade of affluent brats Banks briefly refers to, the Jay McInerneys, David Leavitts, Susan Minots, Amy Hempels, and Peter Camerons? Carver may have been working-class, but he was adopted by benumbed bourgeois children so shell-shocked by modern life that they can scarcely tie their shoelaces together—adopted because Carver in his fiction walks around in a perpetual daze.

In the United States at the moment we are witnessing an explosion of sheltered, intellectually undeveloped people who find themselves unable to cope with even the smallest hint of pain, hardship, or deceit in the world. "But Nixon lied to us! Oh, my!" these people are still saying in their therapy sessions. Why had they expected anything else? What planet have they been living on?

The comparison of Carver with Stephen Crane is unsuited. Crane's writing contains more pyrotechnic energy, more color and action, more pure excitement. His characters are not all the same, not all faceless voids. Stephen Crane attacked larger themes and subjects. His characters try to break out of their ruts; they leave the open boat they are trapped in. Ray Carver never strayed far from what he knew how to do. He never wrote a novel, which was a matter of aesthetic choice, sure—in the sense that Carver knew the novel was beyond his limited capabilities, as it is clearly beyond the capabilities of so many accomplished short-story writers who have recently written novels.

In a time of mediocrity Carver and his crowd stand tall, but they are pygmies next to true giants. Only when a writer goes beyond Fitzgerald and Hemingway intellectually and creatively, instead of being a discount imitation stuck in a swamp of existential listlessness, will that writer deserve the raves Raymond Carver is currently receiving.

KARL WENCLAS
Detroit, Mich.

CONCRETE

My letter to the editor about John Sedgwick's "Strong but Sensitive" (April *Atlantic*) appeared in the August issue. Sedgwick had written, "In the past ten years chemical and mineral additives have been developed to increase concrete's already formidable compressive strength from 5,000 to 19,000 pounds per square inch, and 40,000 pounds per square inch has been achieved in the laboratory." In commenting on this, I remarked that a strength of 40,000 psi was achieved in the laboratory at least as far back as 1930. In Sedgwick's reply he wrote, "If 40,000-pounds-per-square-inch concrete was indeed achieved in a laboratory back in the thirties, that is news to all the concrete specialists I consulted. Perhaps Mr. Mather can cite where and when this event occurred, and why nothing came of it."

The event occurred in the laboratories of the Lone Star Cement Corporation, and the work was done under the direction of Duff A. Abrams. I first became aware of the work by reading a paper by T. C. Powers published in the Proceedings of the Highway Research Board, National Research Council, National Academy of Sciences, 27th Annual Meeting, December 1947, which says, "The strongest materials yet made with portland cement were neat cement cylinders molded under pressure, the cylinders containing about 0.08 g. of water per g. of cement." A footnote stated, "According to a private communication from M. A. Swayze this material was prepared under the direction of Duff A. Abrams in

the laboratories of the Lone Star Cement Corp. Strengths as high as 40,000 lb. per sq. in. were obtained." I quoted this twenty years later in a symposium on concrete strength, also published by the Highway Research Board. Somewhat later a friend and former colleague of mine, Professor Emeritus E. C. Shuman, of Pennsylvania State University, gave me one of the cylinders made by Abrams, which is approximately 50mm in diameter and is now 45mm in height because a few years ago at our laboratory we

ment paste having a water-cement ratio of 0.08 by mass, and find that strengths as high as 40,000 psi may be achieved, they report the results so that somebody else who asks the same question will know what they found and can either regard the question as answered, avoiding the expense of repeating the experiment, or repeat the experiment to see if his results agree with theirs. The work I did that led to my 1967 paper concerned itself with the practical manufacture of concrete for construction that would have compressive

strengths of 10,000 psi. I concluded that it was completely practical and that no new technology was needed, but I was cautioned by a good many of the people I talked to on the subject that it would be a complete waste of money to make the additional effort required to produce such concrete—or, as they put it, "If you had it, what would you do with it?"

Sedgwick also comments in his reply, "I'm still not persuaded that the ACI does much more than the ASCE to teach concrete as an academic subject." If he means that the American Concrete Institute

doesn't run a graduate school associated with a university, that's true—but then of course neither does the American Society of Civil Engineers. I suspect that the ASCE and the ACI both claim an educational mission in their statement of purpose, but I am not aware that the ASCE has a dozen or so educational committees whose mission is limited to education in concrete technology. I have regarded all of the ACI's activity as educational, and I believe that no other organization in the world comes anywhere near contribut-

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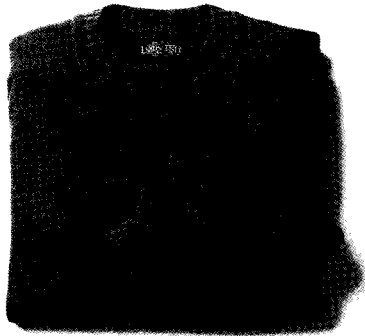
sawed a slice off the bottom half for characterization tests that were relevant to the use of portland cement in specialized applications. This cylinder is inscribed as having been presented by Mr. Abrams to Professor Shuman in New York City on May 24, 1930.

I am not quite sure what Sedgwick has in mind when he says "why nothing came of it," because I don't know what it was he thinks should have come of it. When people perform research to find out what happens when you do something, such as make a ce-

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ing so much to education in the field of concrete as does the ACI.

BRYANT MATHER
*Department of the Army
Vicksburg, Miss.*

John Sedgwick replies:

I am grateful to Bryant Mather for his diligence in reporting the curious history of 40,000-pounds-per-square-inch concrete. Yet the fact that such a discovery could have lain dormant all those years reinforces my basic point that the concrete industry has been extremely slow to get research out of the laboratory and into the nation's infrastructure.

THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

There is much to admire in Charles R. Morris's account of the past of the Catholic Church ("The Three Ages of the Catholic Church," July *Atlantic*); there is, however, much to quarrel with in his analysis of its present and his predictions concerning its future.

Morris says that "Vatican foot-dragging aside, the newer theology [of liberal theologians such as Edward Schillebeeckx, Hans Kung, Richard McBrien, and Charles Curran] will almost surely prevail." What is noteworthy about contemporary Catholicism, however, is that the "newer theology" has already faded. Schillebeeckx, Kung, and the others turn out to have been men of their times; and their times have passed.

To the consternation of the older theologians, the best minds of the new generation of Catholic intellectuals are, in most cases, firmly in favor of a revitalized Catholic orthodoxy. Begin the list with Joseph Boyle, of the University of Toronto; John Finnis and Kevin Flannery, S.J., of Oxford; Robert George, of Princeton; Paul Manikowski, S.J., of Harvard; and Michael Pakaluk, of Clark University.

It is true that liberalism retains a grip on the theology faculties (and in the administrations) of top Catholic universities in the United States. As a result, many of the leading Catholic thinkers of the succeeding generation have assumed positions in secular institutions and departments where, ironically, orthodox Catholicism is more easily tolerated.

A point Morris fails to make is that the Second Vatican Council criticized clericalism and called for greater lay involvement in serving the Church. Apparently this call was effective: the vast majority of orthodox Catholic intellectuals who came of age in the period after the council are lay men and women who heartily embrace liturgical reform and theological renewal while refusing to capitulate to liberal ideology.

Just after his rash prediction that the future lies with aging liberal clerics, Morris remarks that the "official" Catholic Church is in trouble: "priests and nuns resigning in droves, vanishing vocations, empty collection boxes." True, but misleading in the context of Morris's other claims.

In which dioceses are vocations way down? In those headed by the bishops most sympathetic to liberal theology. Where are vocations way up? In those dioceses led by bishops who vigorously teach Catholic orthodoxy. For example, the diocese of Peoria, Illinois, under "conservative" Bishop John Myers, has ordained a dozen young men to the priesthood in this year alone. The number of ordinations for that comparatively small rural diocese has been between ten and fifteen for the past three years. Morris should compare Peoria's figures with those of Milwaukee, Seattle, Richmond, and other dioceses headed by liberal prelates.

Although collections, too, are up in Peoria, Myers's principal concern about vocations is finding enough money to finance seminary training for all the qualified young men who wish to become priests of his diocese. That is one problem that Myers's liberal brethren are unlikely to face.

DAVID S. RUSSO
Charleston, W.Va.

Charles R. Morris replies:

David Russo makes a number of interesting points, and I don't question the value and vitality of the Catholic intellectuals whose views he admires. Whether the challenge represented by Schillebeeckx, Kung, and others is now irrelevant, only time will tell.

ADVICE & CONSENT

Goffrey Wheatcroft has some wise and interesting things to say about South Africa in "Odium Africanum"



(August *Atlantic*). But one of his references to my book on that country, *The Mirror at Midnight: A South African Journey*, seriously misrepresents it. Talking about naive liberals who "project the [U.S.] civil-rights experience" onto South Africa, Wheatcroft writes that "Adam Hochschild lists all that ails the majority in South Africa and ends his catalogue, 'And above all, blacks cannot, in a way that has real meaning, vote.'"

This sentence from my book occurs not in something so simpleminded as a list of "all that ails the majority" but in a quite different context: an analysis of why government strategists have failed to co-opt the urban black middle class. A central theme of *The Mirror at Midnight* is one that Wheatcroft also touches on in his article: that the real struggle in South Africa is not about votes but about economic power. I devote a great many pages to this point: "Essential as peace and votes are, they alone are not enough, for the harshest injustices in South Africa—the economic ones—would still remain." I cite various statistics, such as that the 13 percent of South Africans who are white own approximately 98 percent of the country's capital, and that South Africa has the most unequal distribution of wealth of the fifty-seven nations of the world for which income figures are available. What the government is trying to negotiate today, I argue, is a new constitution that will manage to give everyone the vote *without* altering this basic distribution of power.

It is odd to see myself transformed into a straw man by Wheatcroft when, so far as I can tell, I'm in agreement with him.

ADAM HOCHSCHILD
San Francisco, Calif.

Robbie Clipper Sethi's "Grace" (August *Atlantic*) was a charming and often hilarious story. "Grace" should be prerequisite reading for any American who plans to marry a foreigner. The story will enlighten many on the vast cultural differences and complexities when entering into a marriage of this sort. It perfectly illustrates that the meaning of love, marriage, and commitment comes in many shapes and sizes.

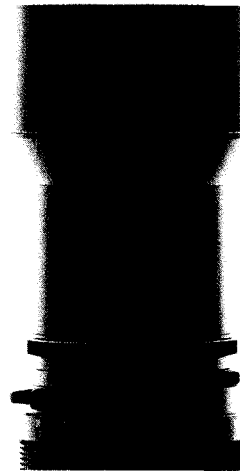
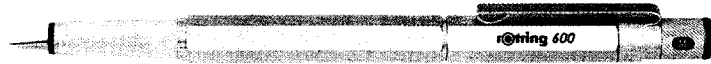
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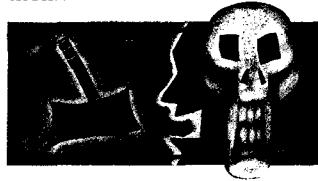
FOOD

November 3, many of the 25,000 runners competing today in the New York City Marathon will fuel up on Gatorade at official aid stations along the course. This is the first year in which Gatorade has helped to sponsor the event—an indication, perhaps, of how competitive the sports-drink market is becoming. Owing to the introduction of new brands, Gatorade, which once had a virtual monopoly on the market, has seen its share drop to 82 percent. Do these sports drinks do a person any good? A study conducted in 1989 and published this year by the U.S. Army found that sports drinks don't leave the stomach any faster than water does; they may offer some benefit to those exercising strenuously for more than an hour. The same Army study, which seemed to anticipate a desert conflict, reported that subjects exercising moderately in hot, dry conditions over long periods of time did not perform significantly better as a result of drinking nutrient solutions instead of water. In any event, the Evian bottle, not the Gatorade bottle, became the symbol of the Gulf War.

DEMOGRAPHICS

November 28, Thanksgiving; the following day is the official start of the holiday-shopping season, and this year, because Thanksgiving falls so late, the season is a mere 26 days, the shortest it can be. (The longest is 32 days.) Not surprisingly, toy stores do more than

half their business during the fourth quarter of the year. One class of items that is expected to do well this season reflects America's evolving demographic character: ethnically correct dolls. Mattel, for example, has this year introduced a line of African-American Barbie-size fashion dolls, which are authentic in terms of appearance; they are the first such dolls to be produced by a major toy manufacturer. (There are black, Hispanic, and Asian Barbies, also manufactured by Mattel, but their bodies are made from the same mold as the original Barbie.) The new line features Shani (which means "marvelous" in Swahili) and her friends Asha ("life") and Nichelle (which doesn't mean anything). The dolls have African-American facial features and a range of skin tones; their hips are wider than Barbie's and their arms and legs more muscular. A sobering thought: the average American girl aged 3 to 11 who owns a Barbie doll (95 percent do) owns seven of them.



GOVERNMENT

November 1, unless vetoed or amended by Congress, new sentencing guidelines go into effect today that allow—and in some instances require—federal judges to slap heavier fines on corporations convicted of fraud, tax evasion, or anti-trust violations. 4, the Ronald Reagan Presidential Library opens, near Los Angeles. Along with exhibits, films, and papers, the library will house the mandatory full-scale replica of the Oval Office and also a 6,000-pound section of the Berlin Wall. 5, Election Day. Among the initiatives on state ballots this year: whether to legalize doctor-assisted suicide

for terminally ill adults, an issue that is before voters in Washington. The wording on the ballot: "Shall adult patients who are in a medically terminal condition be permitted to request and receive from a physician aid-in-dying?" If passed, the Washington law would be the first of its kind in the nation. Also on the ballot in Washington is an initiative that would limit the state's members of Congress to 12 years of service.



ARTS & LETTERS

Sales of ballet shoes surge this month, owing largely to the roughly 500 amateur and professional productions of Tchaikovsky's *Nutcracker* that are in rehearsal across the country. *The Nutcracker* is a financial mainstay for many dance companies: the Pacific Northwest Ballet, in Seattle, for example, pulls in some \$14 million annually from its production, which has sets and costumes by the illustrator Maurice Sendak. "Ballet companies putting on *The Nutcracker* is like choral groups putting on the *Messiah*; it's a money-maker," says Nicole Dekkle, of *Dance Magazine*. November 1, Walt Disney's *Fantasia* will be released for the first time in video form (and for a limited time only). 11, Veteran's Day: *Letters From the Sand*, a collection of wartime correspondence dating from the Civil War through the Gulf War, will be published today by the U.S. Postal Service, and will be available through post offices. The collection was inspired by the 60 million pounds of mail sent to U.S. soldiers during the Persian Gulf crisis. 20, the 1991 National Book Awards will be presented in New York City. The award for poetry has been reinstated.



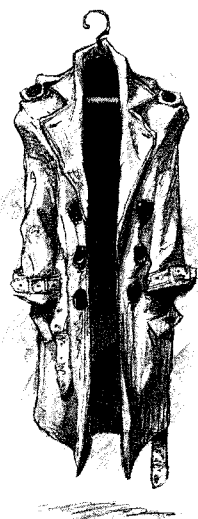
THE SKIES

November 2, the Taurid meteor shower is visible tonight; the Taurids are bits of the comet Encke. 6, New Moon. 17, the Leonid meteor shower peaks. The Leonids—pieces of the comet Tempel-Tuttle, which was first seen in the United States in 1866 by a shy but avid astronomer named H. P. Tuttle—have produced some of the greatest displays in history. 21, Full Moon, also known this month as the Beaver Moon and the Moon of the Falling Leaves.

50 YEARS AGO

Sir Andrew McFadyen, writing in the November, 1941, issue of *The Atlantic Monthly*: "It will be our interest to encourage a disarmed and powerless Germany to seek prosperity and contentment, remembering that deep-seated and continuous depression in Germany cannot be combined with well-being in Europe. We shall have to recognize, firstly, that the fiscal frontiers of Europe are as much an anachronism as fiscal frontiers between the states of the American Union would be, and, secondly, that a peaceful Germany is entitled, if only by her geographical situation, to great economic influence on the Continent. We shall have to unscramble Hitler's eggs, but we should not be blind to the fact that, by wrong methods and for wrong reasons, he has gone a long way to the unification of Europe—has, in fact, almost realized Napoleon's dream."

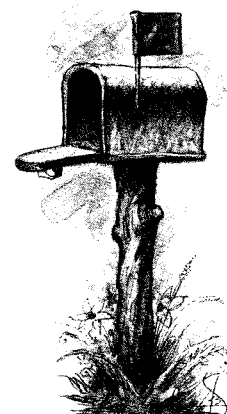




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REPORTS & COMMENT

NOTES

Natural Selections

Anthologizing the world

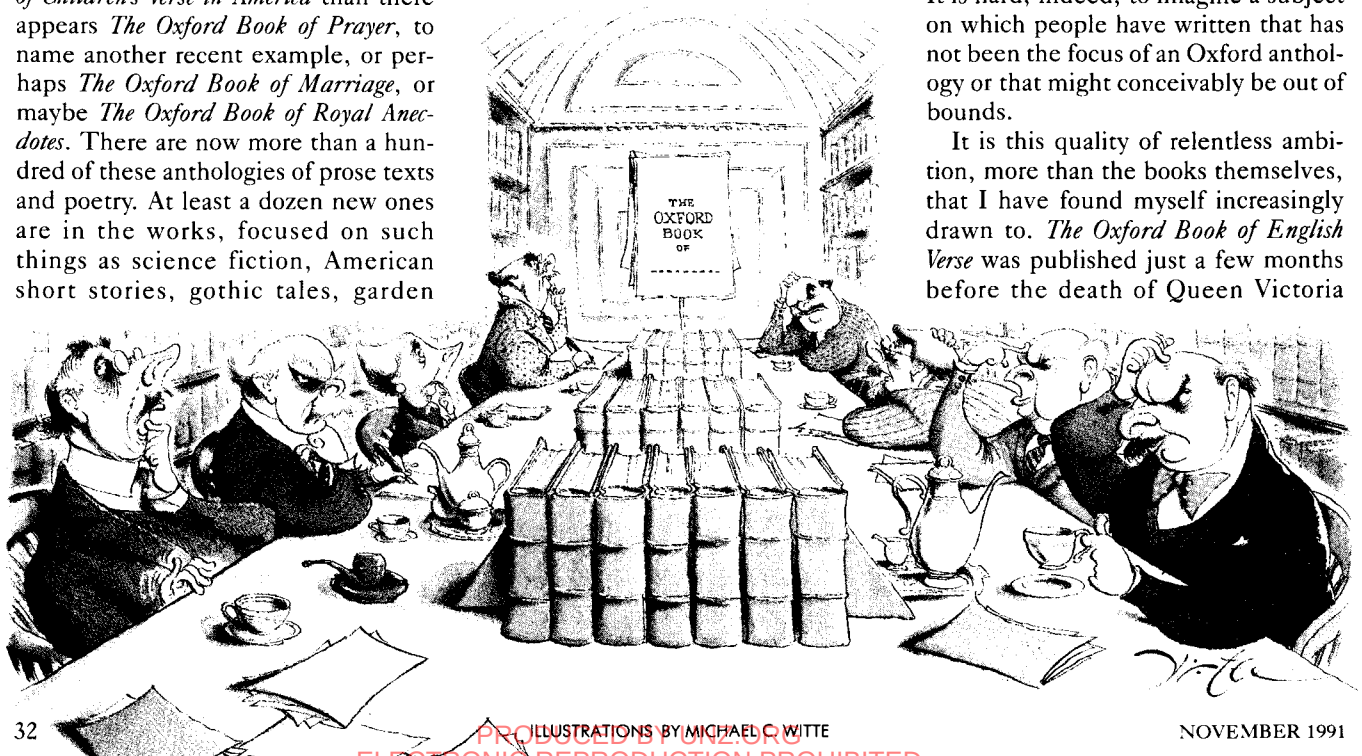
EVERY FEW MONTHS, it has begun to seem, there is brought forth upon this continent, and in Europe, Asia, Africa, and Australia, yet another thick, dense volume in that long-running series of anthologies whose titles begin with the words "The Oxford Book of. . ." I still look forward to the arrival of these books, but I can't keep up with them anymore. No sooner have I found the time to delve into, say, *The Oxford Book of Children's Verse in America* than there appears *The Oxford Book of Prayer*, to name another recent example, or perhaps *The Oxford Book of Marriage*, or maybe *The Oxford Book of Royal Anecdotes*. There are now more than a hundred of these anthologies of prose texts and poetry. At least a dozen new ones are in the works, focused on such things as science fiction, American short stories, gothic tales, garden

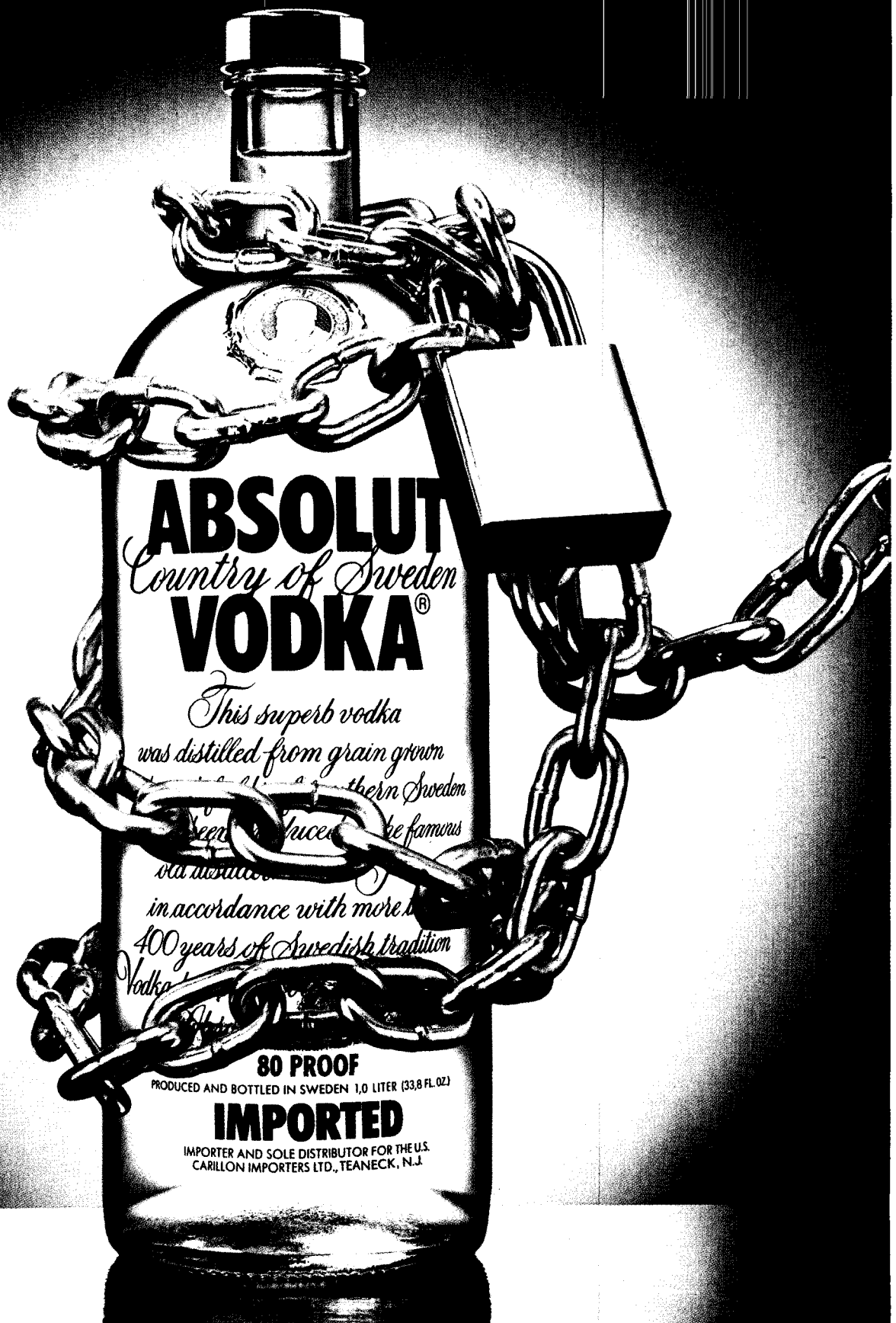
verse, childhood, aging, London, city life, money, villains, and the sea. Not long ago, while I was still occupied with *The Oxford Book of Royal Anecdotes* (and learning, for example, that one of Henry VIII's finger bones was made into the handle of a knife, and that one of Charles I's vertebrae was made into a salt cellar), the mail brought not one but two new specimens, *The Oxford Book of Friendship* and *The Oxford Book of Essays*. Each new tome eventually winds up on a shelf with the previous ones, temporal milestones on a long road whose end, the people at Oxford University Press assure me, I will not live to see.

I must admit that Oxford does a pretty good job with its compendia. At worst they are useful, dutiful reference books; at best they are that and also fun. To be sure, one does get the impression from time to time that an edi-

tor has managed to slip the leash and satisfy some unfortunate obsession (this might account for a volume like *The Oxford Book of Tudor Anthems*), but the subject matter for the most part has been broad, solid, and more or less of a piece with the tradition established by the first volume in the series, *The Oxford Book of English Verse*, which appeared in 1900. This tradition demands that whatever the subject matter happens to be, the material selected be wide-ranging, representative, and choice. There are now Oxford Books of French, German, Irish, Scottish, Scandinavian, Italian, American, New Zealand, and various other kinds of verse (including light, mystical, and late-medieval). There are Oxford Books of short stories, of aphorisms, of dreams, of ballads. There has been an *Oxford Book of Canadian Military Anecdotes* and an *Oxford Book of English Talk*. It is hard, indeed, to imagine a subject on which people have written that has not been the focus of an Oxford anthology or that might conceivably be out of bounds.

It is this quality of relentless ambition, more than the books themselves, that I have found myself increasingly drawn to. *The Oxford Book of English Verse* was published just a few months before the death of Queen Victoria





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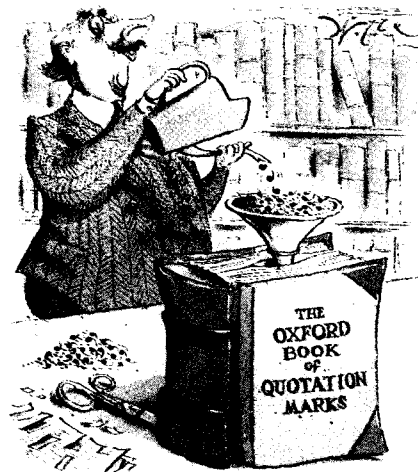
(she went down, according to an eyewitness quoted in the royal-anecdotes volume, "like a great, three-decker ship"), and there is something grand and Victorian about Oxford's anthologizing enterprise, something reminiscent of one of those nineteenth-century British expeditions into the unknown to gather specimens for science and colonies for the Crown. Oxford can no longer send out her sons to colonize the world, but the anthologizing of it remains well within her power.

THE IMPULSE TO anthologize must reflect something fundamental in human nature—the need, perhaps, to impose order and value, or at least the illusion of them, on a few parcels of the vast, trackless expanse of the written word; the desire, too, to set those parcels aside for the ages. How deep the impulse runs is suggested by the fact that anthologies, in the form of what today is known as a *Sammeltafel*, or "collection tablet," appeared as early as the second millennium B.C., when people were still writing in cuneiform. The word "anthology" comes from ancient Greece, where its original meaning, "a garland of flowers," came to be associated with collections of poems and epigrams. Anthologies have flowered everywhere and at every period of time, and their convenience and seeming authority have made them a durable kind of work.

At their most characteristic, anthologies comfortably display a number of contradictory qualities, just as people do. An anthology is stern, reflecting a recognition that relatively little of human creation is worth saving. At the same time it is optimistic, reflecting a hope that some things *are* worth saving. And it is pragmatic, acknowledging that however many the things worth saving, there is room for only so much. An anthology may seem confident, even authoritarian. And yet it may also bow to popular will, the editor understanding that some things simply must be included, no matter what he may happen to think. An anthology is informed, finally, by the struggle between a wish for diversity and balance on the one hand, and the nagging tug of personal preference on the other. Taken together, these strike me as a congenial jumble of stances. Most of us are capable of running through all of them in the course of a

mundane task such as cleaning house or negotiating a salad bar.

In nineteenth-century England the most popular and influential anthology of poems was for many years Sir Francis Palgrave's *Golden Treasury of English Songs and Lyrics* (1861). It was this book, deemed passé by critics but still much beloved, that Oxford University Press had in its sights when it laid plans for *The Oxford Book of English Verse*. Oxford had two formidable assets. One was its development of India paper, which was exceedingly thin but nonetheless opaque, and which made possible the creation of a book that had many more pages than Palgrave's anthology but remained manageable in size. The other was Arthur Quiller-



Couch, in his day known to all simply as Q—the somewhat eccentric novelist and dandy whom Oxford chose to be the anthologist.

Q has been described by the official historian of Oxford University Press, Peter Sutcliffe, as "not strictly speaking academically respectable at that or indeed any other time," but he had great good sense and an enormous capacity for work. Starting with material from the thirteenth century, he eased through English poetry like a ravenous whale, taking in great mouthfuls and straining it through the baleen of preference and expertise, retaining only what he found to be meet and good, or somehow mandatory. (Q felt compelled, Sutcliffe notes, to keep Robert Burns's "A man's a man for a' that," which he disliked, on his initial list, because, he explained, "no Scotsman will do without it.") The book that Q produced was a big success, and sold some 500,000 copies before its first re-

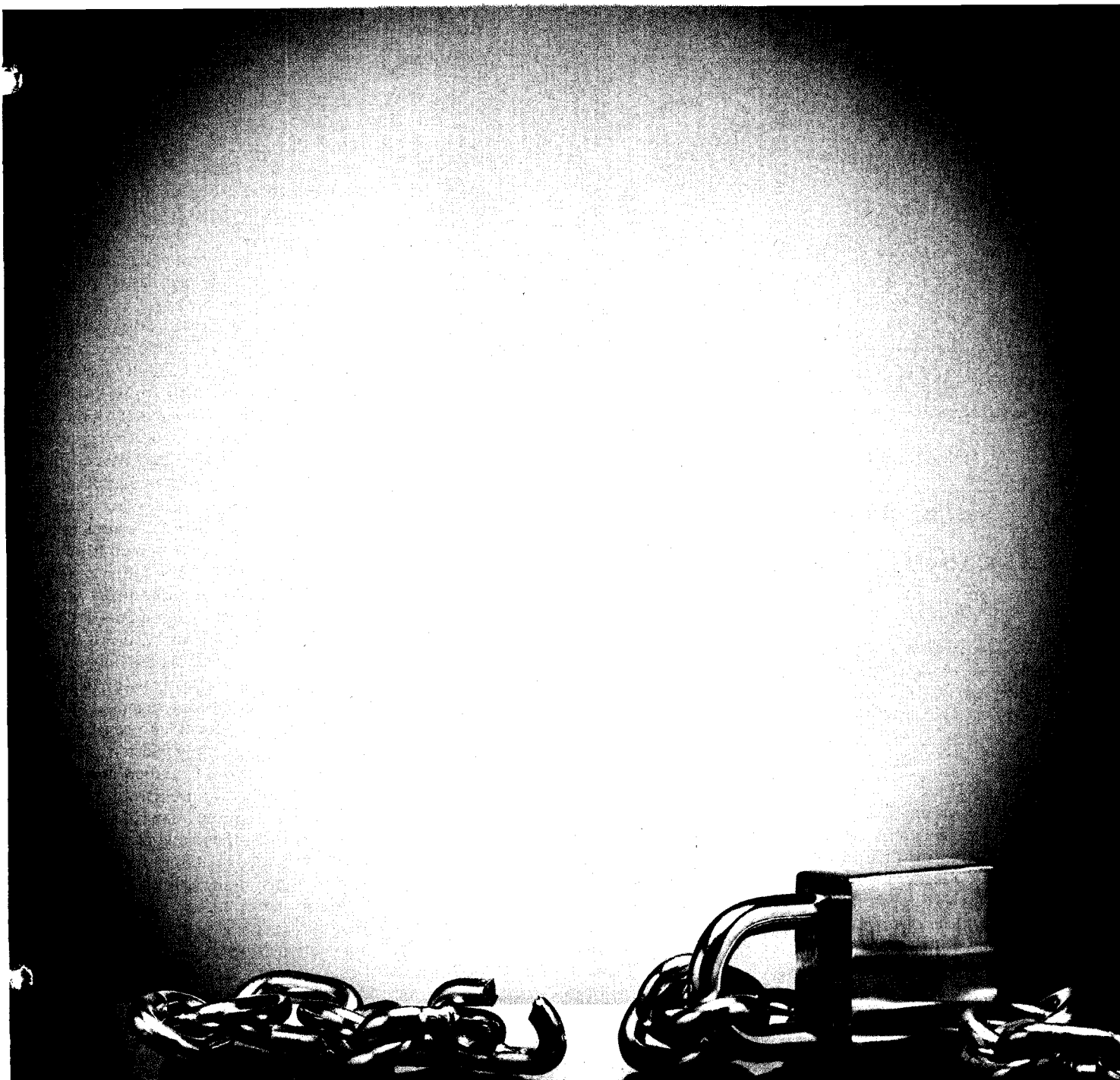
vision, in 1939. By then Q had become, in effect, a professional anthologist (*The Oxford Book of Ballads*, *The Oxford Book of Victorian Verse*, *The Oxford Book of English Prose*), and Oxford, having seen the money to be made, was permanently in the anthology business.

Today, of course, the editors pursue their prey with catholic abandon. Look—over there! British political anecdotes! And look: New Zealand plants! Welsh poetry in English! Canadian ghost stories! Australasian verse! Death!

IN THE END, the most important thing about anthologies is that they tend to survive. The roster of works of history, literature, and philosophy that are available today because someone anthologized them five hundred or a thousand or several thousand years ago is distinguished. It includes much of the extant writing from ancient Israel (fashioned into an anthology called the Bible), a great deal of the ancient Greek science and philosophy that has come down to us (anthologized by the Arabs from Greek texts that no longer survive), and much of the known Middle English poetry (preserved in several medieval anthologies). It is tempting to believe that communications technology today being what it is, the danger that anything will ever again be truly lost, even when this would be desirable, has greatly diminished. Still, when I look at a shelf of Oxford Books, I can't help thinking of it as a kind of prudent safeguard—a Noah's ark (speaking of anthologies) of our civilization.

I must confess, though, to some slight worry that a few species may be forgotten. Diet books and self-help books are mainstays of modern society. Are plans afoot to anthologize them? What about personal advertisements? Or the financial-disclosure statements of public servants? Or the official post-mortems on technological disasters? Or the college-admissions essays of notable people? Or radio talk-show colloquies? Or documents obtained under the Freedom of Information Act? Or court-ordered-wiretap transcripts? I offer these in a spirit of friendly assistance, mindful that the editors of *The Oxford Book of Italian Madrigals* don't leave many stones unturned.

—Cullen Murphy



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The Real Lesson of the Gulf War

The industrial states must find a way to protect themselves from their own avarice: selling weapons to the Third World must stop

IN THE 1980s the Reagan Administration fastened on the term "the truly needy" to blunt public concern about cuts it had made in programs to help the merely needy. The Bush Administration has lately devised a foreign-policy equivalent: "weapons of mass destruction." In the wake of the Gulf War the Administration is against the proliferation of these weapons. It is much less resolutely against the proliferation of weapons of mere destruction, however. Indeed, even before the dust of the war had settled in the desert, teams of arms salesmen not only from the United States but also from Britain, France, West Germany, and other countries were flocking to the Middle East to tout their wares. They found plenty of willing buyers.

Egypt has made clear that it would like to buy Hawk missiles, M-60 tank upgrades, and F-16 fighters. Israel wants portable battlefield-navigation systems, upgrades for the F-15 fighter and the M-109 artillery piece, and more Patriot missiles. The United Arab Emirates would like Abrams M1A1 tanks and Patriot missiles, and so would Bahrain and Turkey.

By far the biggest buyer will be Saudi Arabia, which is already in line to receive a \$15 billion arms package including F-15 fighters, Apache helicopters, Abrams M1A1 tanks, AWACS radar planes, Patriot missiles, multiple-launch rocket systems, Seahawk helicopters, and Bradley fighting vehicles. This is on top of a \$30 billion deal signed with Great Britain in 1988 for fighter aircraft, missiles, radars, airfields, and ships.

Implicit in this brisk trade in arms is the idea that conventional warfare using weapons of mere destruction is in some way acceptable, whereas forms of warfare that use "weapons of mass destruction" are morally unacceptable. But with modern weapons the distinction between conventional and unconventional warfare has become blurred. The firepower of many modern conventional systems is so terrible that they, too, can be accurately described as weapons of mass destruction.

The Western combatants, mean-

while, will now need to replenish the stocks that were expended in the war. When the procurement decisions are made, those weapons that performed well—lasers, microcomputers, stand-off systems, Stealth technology—will be ordered. The production of these new weapons means that large numbers of the most modern weapons will come on the market and be sold to developing countries while manufacturers also seek rich customers who can afford the new systems, thus reducing unit cost and increasing profits. The replacement of old weapons by new in the arsenals of the West and the drive by arms manufacturers to hold down unit cost by finding more customers—this is the dynamic that has propelled the arms race for so long.

Within that cycle an additional impetus drives the proliferation of conventional arms after the Gulf War. Defense contractors who supplied the allied forces believe that they have a new opportunity to market weapons that have been tested and proved in battle. At a time of shrinking defense budgets and contracts, exports could make up the shortfall for contractors who would otherwise be forced to shut down production lines and lay off workers. These manufacturers will have little interest in arguments about the morality of the arms business.

And the West won't be the only seller in the postwar arms bazaar. As the Eastern-bloc countries reorganize their military forces and seek new sources of foreign exchange, they will try to produce more weapons for export and also to sell weapons from existing inventories. For example, Czechoslovakia last May announced plans to export 5,500 weapons, including tanks, artillery systems, and armored personnel carriers, which have to be removed from the Czech armed forces under the conventional-arms treaty. Rather than destroy these weapons, the Czechs are discussing selling the T-72 tanks to Syria and Iran and are looking for customers for the other weapons.

The real challenge facing the world in the aftermath of the Gulf War and the Cold War is how to break out of the arms cycle that puts ever more advanced weapons into the hands of what the columnist Charles Krauthammer has called "weapons states." While the exact terms of President George Bush's new world order have never been ar-

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ticated, the major Western allies have understood the phrase to mean that the United States will lead the way in breaking out of the arms race that has dominated so much of international trade since the end of the Second World War.

Yet already the focus of the struggle in the arms race is once again on the competition for sales and not on the fight to reduce the traffic. If much more time is allowed to pass, it will be clear that national-security policy in the Bush Administration is still being dictated by the traditional unholy trinity of defense-industry lobbyists, diehards in the Pentagon, and State Department policy-makers who see arms as a tool of foreign policy.

THE EXACT NUMBER of countries with a chemical-weapons capability is not known. What is known is that the number of countries possessing such a capability or having ambitions to acquire one is growing. Twelve developing countries—Burma, China, Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, Iraq, Israel, Libya, North Korea, Syria, Taiwan, and Vietnam—are now believed to have chemical-weapons programs. Nineteen other countries—Afghanistan, Angola, Argentina, Chad, Chile, Cuba, El Salvador, Guatemala, India, Indonesia, Laos, Mozambique, Nicaragua, Pakistan, Peru, the Philippines, South Africa, South Korea, and Thailand—have been trying to obtain chemical weapons and may have succeeded. The developing countries have in general had to acquire their chemical-weapons capability on their own, usually illegally but frequently with the complicity of Western companies and governments who turn a blind eye because they have found a useful source of export earnings.

In 1985 plans for a chemical-weapons plant at Rabta, in Libya, were drawn up by the West German firm Imhausen-Chemie, which was in financial difficulties at the time and needed the cash from the Libyan contract. Imhausen commissioned plans for the plant from the Salzgitter steel company, which is owned by the German government, telling Salzgitter that the work was for a pharmaceutical plant in Hong Kong. The Japan Steel Works did much of the construction at Rabta, employing Thai workers. By

1988 the plant was producing nerve-gas casings, using steel supplied by other West German companies.

British and American intelligence had been watching the project closely and by the summer of 1988 were convinced that once it was fully operational, the Libyans would be able to produce from 22,000 to 84,000 pounds of nerve agents every day, making Rabta the largest chemical-weapons plant in the Third World. When confronted with the evidence, the Japanese government claimed that the Rabta complex was in fact a desalination plant—though it is fifty miles from the sea. No action of any kind was taken against the Japanese; and yet, earlier this year, the Bush Administration was prepared to impose sanctions against Japan in order to protect a rare turtle, whose shell the Japanese use to make ornaments.

By the beginning of this year U.S. intelligence officials were saying that the Rabta complex was producing chemical weapons and that construction had begun on a massive underground storage facility nearby. Exactly who is building the underground facility is not known.

To try and curb such blatant abuses, Australia took the initiative in 1985 and invited representatives of a number of industrialized nations to a meeting at the Australian embassy in Paris the following June. The first meeting was attended by representatives of Australia, Canada, Japan, New Zealand, the United States, and the ten member nations of the European Community. The Australia Group, as it became known, meets every six months and has by now expanded to include Norway, Portugal, Spain, Switzerland, Austria, and representatives of the European Commission, the European Community's executive arm. Having drawn up a list of chemicals that are commonly used in the manufacture of chemical weapons, the group designated eleven of them to require export licenses from member states, and the export of a further thirty-nine will be controlled by all members by December. This watch list will give early warning of a country's intention to go into the chemical-weapons business.

For the Australia Group's initiative to succeed, its members must effectively monitor the transfer of chemicals and prosecute violators. But there is no

standard of enforcement to which every member is required to adhere, nor is there any way of penalizing either group members that ignore the agreement or other nations that simply export the raw materials.

IN THE MIDDLE of the military buildup in the Gulf last November, when President Bush had already decided to go to war the following January if necessary, the President vetoed a bipartisan congressional bill that would have imposed automatic sanctions on foreign companies that produce chemical weapons and on nations using such weapons. The Administration said that the bill was unsatisfactory because it did not allow the President to waive the terms in the interests of national security.

After the veto the Administration announced its own measure, called the Enhanced Proliferation Control Initiative, which greatly increased the number of chemicals that would be subject to export controls and included criminal penalties for American citizens who violated the regulations. However, many of the chemicals on the list are used in making a wide range of products, such as plastics, pharmaceuticals, and fertilizers. Business interests argued that the initiative unfairly penalized American companies and opened the door to foreign competitors who did not suffer similar restrictions. For example, one of the chemicals on the list can be used to remove hair from hides before tanning, but with some modifications it can also be used to make nerve gas. Lobbyists argued that by restricting the export of such dual-use chemicals, the United States was unfairly restricting American industry.

Then, last February, the Senate passed new legislation, the Omnibus Export Amendments Act, which required the President to impose sanctions on countries and companies developing or using chemical weapons. It is similar to the measure vetoed by the President the previous November, but this time the President is not expected to use his veto if the House passes the legislation.

Any new arms-control measures must have a common theme: behind the moral principles must lie tough sanctions that make transgressors re-

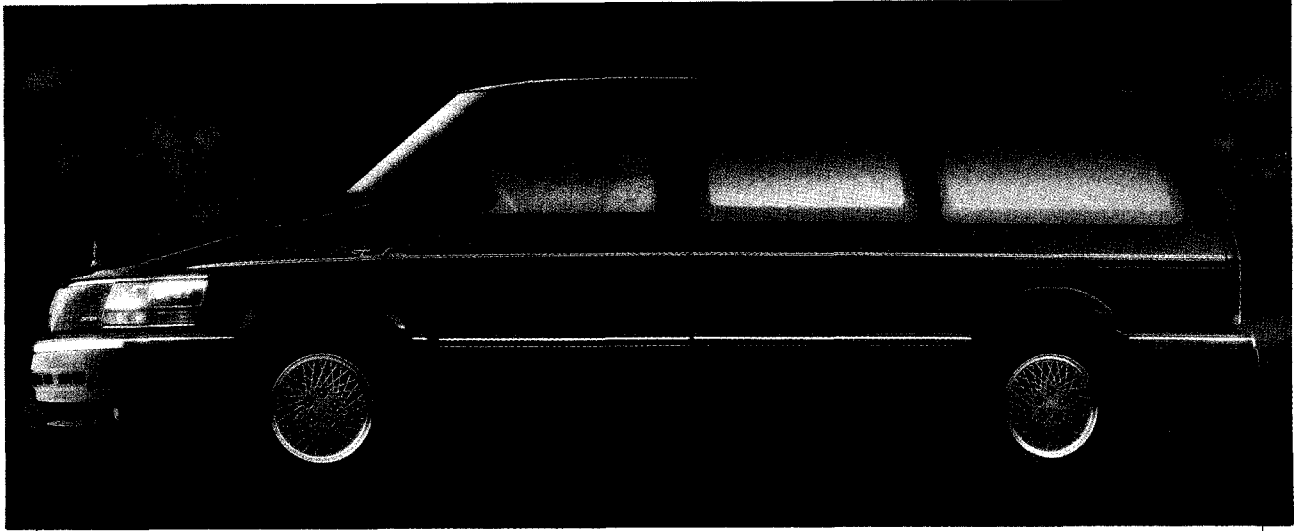
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DANCE AND THEATER

by Laura Jacobs and Matthew Gurewitsch

LAND ON TOUR

Expressing existential states between angst and ecstasy, life and death, the husband-and-wife performance team of Eiko and Koma seem to disappear into cosmic meanings—into each other. Their work, Butoh-inspired, is maximal in impact, minimalist in technique; it's as if they paint wall-sized canvases with single-bristle brushes. This year's new work, *Land*, was inspired by the people of Taos



Eiko and Koma

Pueblo, in New Mexico. Eiko and Koma premiere *Land* at the Brooklyn Academy of Music November 5 through 10. For tickets call 212-307-4100. A tour follows: Cleveland, November 16; New York's Movement Research, December 7 and 8; University of Nebraska in Lincoln, January 18; Washington, D.C.'s Kennedy Center; March 9 and 10; Boston's Emerson Theater, March 19, 20, and 21; and the Flynn Theater in Burlington, Vermont, March 24. —L.J.

STEWART'S SOLO CAROL

Patrick Stewart's one-man performance of *A Christmas Carol* is no mere reading. Best known as Captain Jean-Luc Picard in *Star Trek: The Next Generation*, the Royal Shakespeare Company stalwart enacts each and every Fezziwig and Cratchit, none of the women or children excepted, plus a memorable gallery of walk-ons, several major ghosts, and of course Ebenezer Scrooge. Few novelists are adapted to dramatic ends more often than Charles Dickens and none for better reason: he wrote great characters and put them in great scenes. What almost always gets lost is the spellbinding voice of the storyteller. Not this time. Stewart does that, too.

His *Christmas Carol* plays Santa Barbara, November 23 and 24; Salt Lake City, November 30; Anchorage, December 7 and 8; Pasadena, December 14 and 15; and the Eugene O'Neill Theatre on Broadway, December 17 to 29 (212-518-3300). A recording on Simon and Schuster Audio Books is promised, also. —M.G.

THE WORD ON GRAHAM

Martha Graham's death, last spring, at 96, ended one of history's longest and most fitful dialogues between body and mind. For those who can think of Graham only in her dotage, as an ancestress crowned with a black bun the size of a cantaloupe, spouting spare epiphanies ("Movement never lies"), her just-published autobiography, *Blood Memory* (Doubleday), is refreshing. Though the title sounds like a grim Graham dance (that totemic mix of the tangible and the transient), the book skirts abstraction. Like all good autobiographies it contains crystals of cultural history. More interesting still is the voice. In public pronouncements Graham made like the Delphic oracle—grave and high-toned. It's surprising to find what wry detail that oracle was capable of.

For a more objective view, as well as the lowdown on tough subjects Graham glosses over—her love affairs, her alcoholism—turn to Agnes de Mille's new biography, *Martha: The Life and Work of Martha Graham* (Random House): shrewd, generous, inside, and eloquent. For more on the mechanics of Graham technique, Acappella Books is bringing out *Martha Graham: The Evolution of Her Dance Theory and Training 1926–1991*, a collection of "I was there" explanations by Graham's students, colleagues, and company members. —L.J.



Martha Graham in 1984

LINKE WITH TRADITION

Susanne Linke may be the only modern-dance diva alive since the passing of Graham. Linke is not a "pretty" dancer; she is a dance animal: sturdily muscled, built for resonance, her face grave and changeable as a Kabuki master's. This German modern



Linke at B.A.M. in 1985

dancer first came to notice when she danced with a bathtub at Brooklyn Academy of Music in 1985—a strange solo that found intimations of *Swan Lake* within the

imagery of the bathroom, a sublime scatology. Linke is nothing if not unflinching. She reads like a throwback, a link to those modern dancers of old who embraced the big subjects with spine and soul. She is witty but not ironic, not given to postmodern

sleight of hand. This November 8 and 9, Columbia College Chicago (312-271-7928) presents Linke in two solo concerts—the bathtub dance included. —L.J.

WEST PLAYS EAST PLAYS WEST



Achilles

Achilles, drawn from the *Iliad* and staged for the People's Light & Theatre Company, in Malvern, by the Illinois-based Kabuki master Shozo Sato, seeks to strike the universal chord that makes the odds all even. Maybe it will. A preliminary student production (also in English) visited Japan last winter. "Illinois Kabuki Wows Audi-

ence," read a headline in the Nagoya newspaper *The Daily Yomiuri*. Achilles, "re-splendent in a golden helmet and crimson armor," met with particular admiration. How the impassioned anti-war message came through was not reported.

By the time *Achilles* came home to Malvern, late last month, it had premiered at the First International Festival of Ancient Drama, in Cyprus, toured Hungary, and highlighted Philadelphia's Festival Mythos. The production runs through November 17 (215-644-3500). —M.G.

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*Laura Jacobs is editor-in-chief of Stagebill and dance critic for The New Leader.

*Matthew Gurewitsch is a writer who lives in New York.

POPULAR MUSIC

by Charles M. Young

REFINED METAL?

Though the band Motorhead should be credited as the progenitor of "thrash metal" or "speed metal," as the genre is interchangeably called, Metallica has done the most to popularize a form of rock that is second only to rap for its irritation factor to parents. Characterized by manically stroked sixteenth notes, snarled vocals, and lyrics about death, thrash inspires its mostly male audience literally to thrash about with periodic interludes of "moshing," when the band and audience go into slow motion.



Metallica

Since the early eighties, Metallica has taken thrash from underground obscurity to mass acceptance through sheer virtuosity and ferocity. Having received little airplay and made just one video during its first four albums, Metallica is now a genuine grassroots phenomenon, and grassroots everywhere will be happy

to hear that the band is touring this month.

Most recently, Metallica has stunned the music community with its eponymously titled fifth album on Elektra. *Billboard* was stunned when it became the third hard-rock/heavy-metal album of the past few months to debut on the charts at number one (the others being Skid Row's *Slave to the Grind* and Van Halen's *For Unlawful Carnal Knowledge*). Fans were stunned by the richness and intricacy of the sound. And critics were stunned by the lyrics of "Don't Tread on Me."

One of the last bastions of leftwing thought in American journalism, the community of rock critics has expressed a sense of betrayal over *Metallica*, while praising its sonic excellence. On its third album, *Master of Puppets* (1986), the band had railed mightily against propaganda and manipulation. With its fourth album, *...And Justice For All* (1988), the video for the song "One" incorporated footage from Dalton Trumbo's "Johnny Got His Gun" and made a riveting anti-war statement amidst the general haircuts-and-frivolity atmosphere on MTV. Thus the lyrics of "Don't Tread on Me," an endorsement of the Gulf War, came as quite a surprise: "To secure peace is to prepare for war/So be it/Settle the score." Still, rock and roll has never promised intellectual consistency, only emotional honesty, and there Metallica has never failed to deliver.

PRINCE AT 30-SOMETHING

Once a child prodigy in funk, decadence, theology, and massive record sales, Prince has grown to an indeterminate age somewhere around 30 with his basic message unchanged: "Love God and



Prince

have sex in as many different variations as you can imagine." Passed on the right by heavy metal ("Love Satan and have sex the way I want or I'll shoot you") and on the left by Madonna ("Love God and buy my records because I know even more variations than Prince"), Prince is making a strong bid to reclaim his title with *Diamonds and Pearls* (Warner Bros.). Inspired by his latest band, The New Power Generation, Prince has produced his finest record in years, perfect for dancing with its monster rhythm tracks and catchy tunes. Even better for his career, the song "Gett Off" details "23 different positions in a one-night stand" and should move him to the top of the Parents' Music Resource Center hit list. And yes, Prince, who does more things better than any other performer extant, will be starting a tour soon.

DOUBLE-BARRELED

The unprecedented simultaneous release of two albums of new material, *Use Your Illusion I* and *Use Your Illusion II*, by Guns N' Roses on Geffen Records has generated as much anticipation and excitement as Michael Jackson did in 1983 with *Thriller*.

But if you catch the act live, bring your lunch. And supper. The band has taken to renting halls until 4 A.M. to accommodate its erratic and charismatic singer, Axl Rose, who regularly shows up at concerts two hours late. Refusing to work with a set list, the band has been jamming into the wee hours. This is unlikely to become a trend among other acts as union costs skyrocket after 11 P.M. in most venues. Having sold a record-setting 14 million copies of its debut album, *Appetite for Destruction* (1987), Guns N' Roses can afford to play only when the mood strikes.

What has become a trend is Rose's



Guns N' Roses

habit of denouncing critics, reporters, and publications by name in both stage rant and song ("Get in the Ring"). The latest group to join the chorus is Public Enemy, the rap group who made such an impact with "Fight the Power" in Spike Lee's film

Do the Right Thing. The group members also made a big impact with certain comments in the press that many saw as anti-Semitic. They've distrusted journalists ever since and are currently "dissing" them in several songs on *Apocalypse 91... The Enemy Strikes Black* (Def Jam/Columbia).

As the foremost practitioners of the righteous-anger school of rap, Public Enemy makes convincing arguments when railing against white racism, economic exploitation, alcoholism among the oppressed, and police brutality. Audiences of all races respond, and Public Enemy has enriched the growing cross-fertilization between rap and metal by recording and performing with Anthrax, a neo-punk thrash band with whom they are just completing a tour.

•Charles M. Young is a contributing editor of *Musician* magazine.

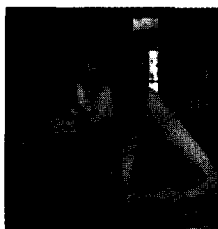
FILM

by Ella Taylor

POLES APART

If you're a film-festivalgoer, you may have seen Polish director Krzysztof Kieslowski's extraordinary *Decalogue*, a cycle of 10 films about love, pain, and morality in contemporary Warsaw, loosely based on the Ten Commandments. You won't have seen it otherwise, because no independent distributor so far can meet the price of the Canadian owner of the North American rights.

However, in late November Miramax will release Kieslowski's magical new film, *The Double Life of Véronique*, which won three prizes at Cannes this year. A



Véronique

dreamy, symphonic work of painful beauty, *Véronique* is about two identical young women (both played by the exquisite Irène Jacob), born on the same day in Poland and France, each of whom goes through life with the sense that she has a double somewhere. With its haunting, wistful music and elliptical

images that refuse to explain themselves, *Véronique* is a film to sink into rather than analyze. Asked about its sensual, operatic intensity at this year's Toronto Film Festival, the enigmatic director shrugged his shoulders and said, "Well, life is boring."

CROWN JEWELS

However underfed, the British film industry keeps lobbying small gems across the Atlantic, largely financed by coproductions. Mike Leigh follows his Thatcher-era comedy *High Hopes* with another chapter of his amiably loony history of the English working classes. The less overtly political though still mordantly funny *Life Is Sweet* (October Films) centers on a beleaguered but resilient couple whose twin teenage daughters, one bulimic and the other a plumber, refuse to conform to plan. From Miramax, Anglo-eccentricity lives on in Bebban Kidron's *Antonia and Jane*, a slightly stogy but lovable comedy about two neurotic pals—the faddist but creative plain Jane with an "interesting



Gielgud in *Prospero's Books*

life," and Antonia, a flighty beauty with a misbehaving nuclear family—who share mutual envy and a therapist. Isaac Julien (*Looking for Langston*) gracefully directs *Young Soul Rebels*, about two disc jockeys propagating funk music from a black pirate radio station in a London garage. Set against the 1977 celebrations of the Queen's Silver Jubilee, the film is part murder mystery, part gay and heterosexual love story, and part biting political commentary in the tradition of *My Beautiful Laundrette*. *Prospero's Books*, the latest from Peter Greenaway (*The Cook, The Thief, His Wife and Her Lover*), stars John Gielgud in what will undoubtedly be an unorthodox reading of Shakespeare's *The Tempest*.

GOURMET VIDEO

If you like foreign films and you're tired of the selection at your video-rental store, consider the Connoisseur Video Collection, a Los Angeles video mail-order company that specializes in up-market films from around the world. Their standing inventory boasts a wide range of classics, among them Jean Renoir's *Grand Illusion* and Jean-Luc Godard's *Breathless*, from France; Victor Erice's exquisite political allegory *Spirit of the Beehive* (Spain); and director Hiroshi Teshigahara's *Woman in the Dunes* (Japan). There's also a sprinkling of American

classics, including Orson Welles's *The Trial* and Frank Capra's *Lady for a Day*, and an ongoing series of Bolshoi Ballet films. Among their new releases are Luchino Visconti's opulent *The Innocent*, about the moral decline of the pre-Fascist Italian aristocracy; and Roberto Rossellini's *Open City*, starring the magnificent Anna Magnani as an Italian resistance fighter in the Second World War. Some are full-length directors' versions and all are subtitled in English. Prices run as high as \$79.95 and as low as \$29.95 on sale. To order call 800-FILMART.

PAST MASTERY

istory makes its mark on the Hollywood studios' fall-release buildup, both in remakes and in films set in the past. Martin Scorsese repossesses Robert De Niro for his remake of the 1962 thriller *Cape Fear* (also starring Nick Nolte and Jessica Lange), about an ex-con who terrorizes the family of the lawyer who failed to get him acquitted years earlier (Universal). Steve Martin and Diane Keaton pair improbably in Charles Shyer's remake of



The Addams Family

the 1950 family comedy *Father of the Bride* (Touchstone). For kids and adults, Anjelica Huston continues gothic in Barry Sonnenfeld's film, *The Addams Family* (Paramount); Disney releases its animated *Beauty and the Beast*; and Steven Spielberg dispatches a grownup Peter Pan back to the eternal present of Never-Never Land in TriStar's *Hook*, starring Dustin Hoffman and Robin Williams. Also from TriStar, Barry Levinson's heralded *Bugsy*, with the Beatty-Bening combo playing the mobster who invented Las Vegas, and his moll. Fox offers two World War II movies: David Seltzer's *Shining Through*, in which Melanie Griffith plays a New York secretary who helps her boss (Michael Douglas) in undercover heroics behind enemy lines, and (more promising) Mark Rydell's *For the Boys*, starring Bette Midler and James Caan as a wartime song-and-dance duo. Nancy Savoca (*True Love*) directs *Dogfight*, with River Phoenix as a sixties marine who finds unexpected bliss with "ugly" date Lili Taylor (Warner).

•Ella Taylor is chief film critic of L.A. Weekly.



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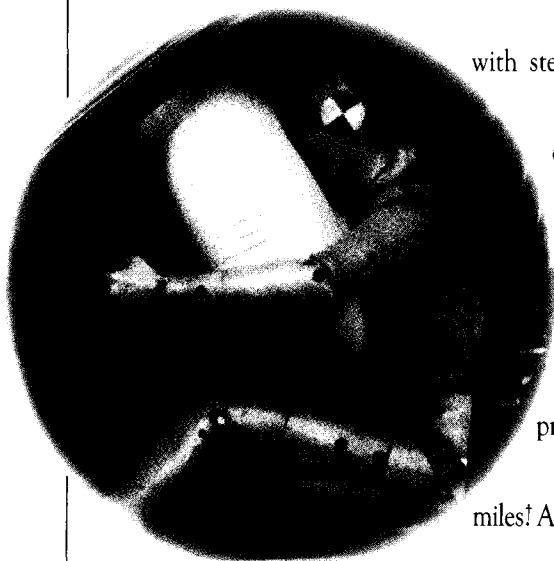
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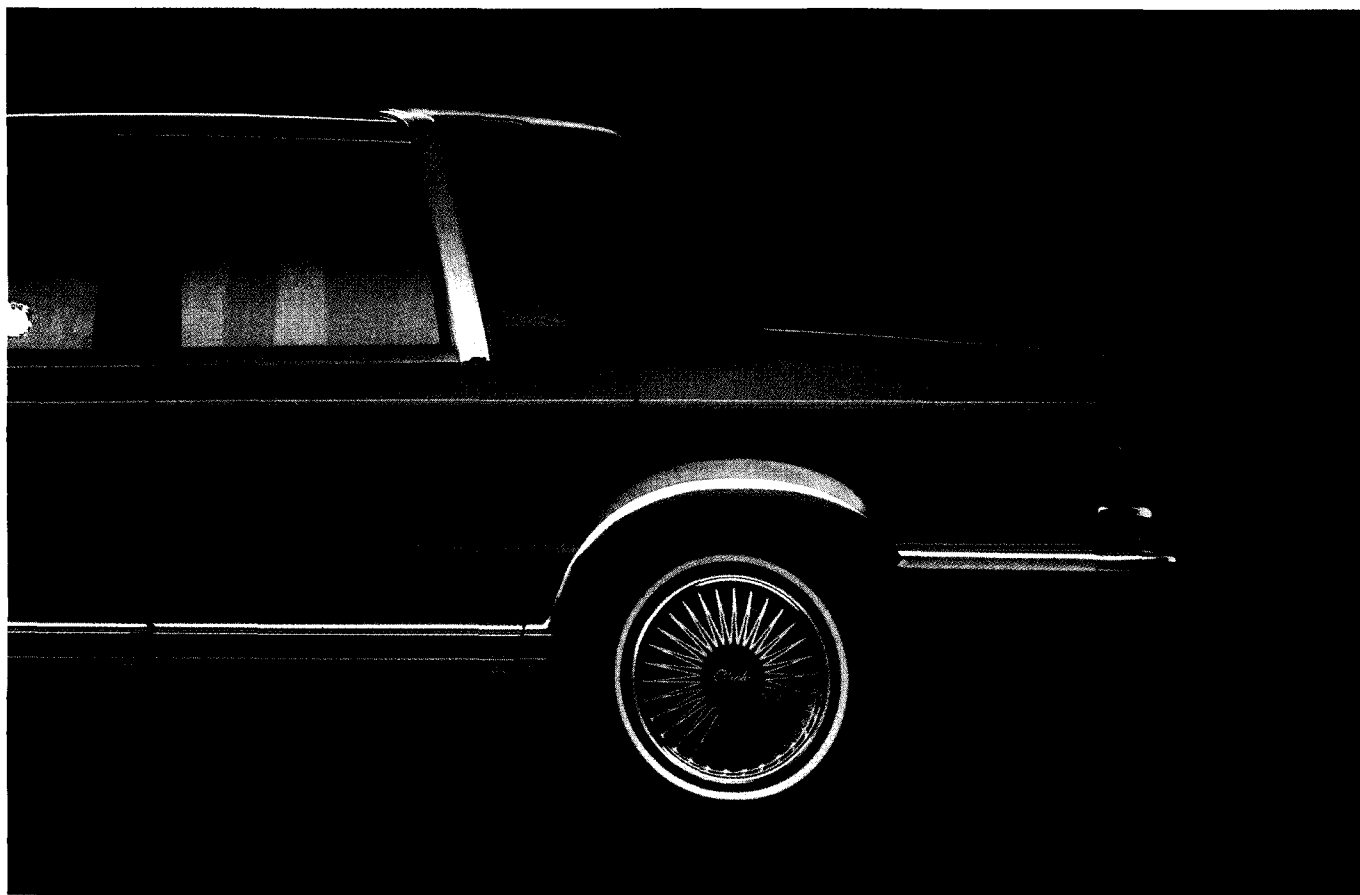
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CLASSICAL MUSIC

by Matthew Gurewitsch

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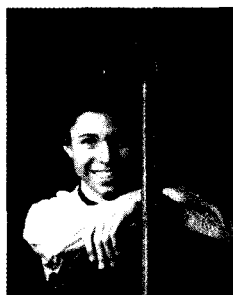


Gidon Kremer

The Mozart year, still in progress, will have seen few programs of greater integrity, interest, and intelligence than the pair scheduled for Carnegie Hall on December 6 and 7, when Gidon Kremer takes the stage as director and soloist with the German Chamber Philharmonic Orchestra. The five violin concerti are scheduled, alternating with contemporary pieces that, in their own ways, comment on the classical style.

Such juxtapositions are a Kremer specialty: at the Salzburg Festival this summer, he offered, with the same forces, a mixed bill of Johann Sebastian Bach and the contemporary Arvo Pärt (including his whimsically titled "If Bach Had Kept Bees"): complementary exercises in spirituality. What lessons are in store this time, with Lourie's *Concerto da Camera* and Schnittke's *Mozart à la Haydn* back to back with Mozart concerti à la Mozart? Nothing conventional, you may be sure. Besides, there is the austere beauty of Kremer's playing to look forward to. For tickets call 212-247-7800. Other concerts by Kremer and the German Chamber Philharmonic are slated for Chicago, December 3 and 4; Los Angeles, December 9 and 10; San Francisco, December 12; and Berkeley, December 13. For home listening, Kremer's readings of the Mozart concerti are available on a pair of compact discs from Deutsche Grammophon.

Another string artist of an independent turn of mind is the youthful master cellist Matt Haimovitz, not yet 20. His recordings to date, under the batons of such maestros as James Levine and Andrew Davis (Deutsche Grammophon), are of the salable standard repertoire. But for a recital at the Metropolitan Museum of Art on December 28 (212-570-3949), he has chosen a high road that should prove—for himself and his listeners—as fascinating as it is challenging. There will be three unaccompanied works: suites by Bach and Britten and a sonata by Ligeti (whose ethereal textures were heard to haunting effect on the soundtrack of 2001: *A Space Odyssey*). The finale is the world premiere of *Improvisations for Solo Cello and Electric Guitar*, with Steven Mackey, specially composed for the occasion.



Matt Haimovitz

A STAR FROM THE NORTH

Mariss Jansons—born in Latvia, trained in Leningrad, Salzburg, and Vienna, now in his late forties—is not one of those careerist maestros who snaps up fancy guest engagements left and right. To be sure, he gets around, what with his associations with the likes of the London Philharmonic, the Concertgebouw, and the major American orchestras. But his principal attachments are to the Leningrad Philharmonic, which he serves as associate conductor, and most of all to the Oslo Philharmonic, whose music director he has been since 1979. In years gone by, one might have looked to the Oslo for recordings of regional Scandinavian items: Halvorsen, Svendsen, Sinding, maybe even Grieg, though not Sibelius (he belongs to the world). It was not an ensemble one would have expected to hear on



Mariss Jansons

major international labels in the virtuoso repertoire, let alone live on a major international tour. Now it is. The Jansons-Oslo discography—the Tchaikovsky symphonies and Mahler's Second ("The Resurrection") on Chandos, and works of Tchaikovsky, Dvořák, Prokofiev, Ravel, et al. on Angel-EMI—documents full-blooded forces of old-world grandeur: powerful, confident, reveling in bold colors yet not lacking in subtlety. Karajan was one of Jansons's mentors; it shows.

This month, Jansons leads his Norwegians to the North American music capitals with programs including Mendelssohn and Shostakovich. Concerts are scheduled for San Francisco, November 10; Los Angeles, November 11 and 12; Chicago, November 15; and Carnegie Hall, November 23 (212-247-7800).

TRUE TO THE SEA

Even through Yukio Mishima's short, shocking novel *The Sailor Who Fell From Grace With the Sea* is oceanic music; the "last enormous farewell" from the horn of a departing ship, Mishima writes, screams like a voice of the cosmos, "rocking the whole harbor and carrying to every city window; besetting kitchens with dinner on the stove, and shoddy hotel bedrooms ... and schools and tennis courts and graveyards; plunging everything into a moment of grief and ruthlessly tearing even the hearts of the uninvolved." In the course of a long career full of surprises, Hans Werner Henze has on occasion shown a capacity for the tremendous. His new opera, *Das Verratene Meer (The Ocean Betrayed)*, picks up Mishima's tale of a young widow, her sea-faring lover, and her 13-year-old son, who kills him; if it conveys Mishima's elemental majesty, the score must be a marvel. The San Francisco Opera presents the American premiere November 8 to 23; for tickets call 415-864-3330.

*Matthew Gurewitsch is a writer who lives in New York.



A NEW SEASON

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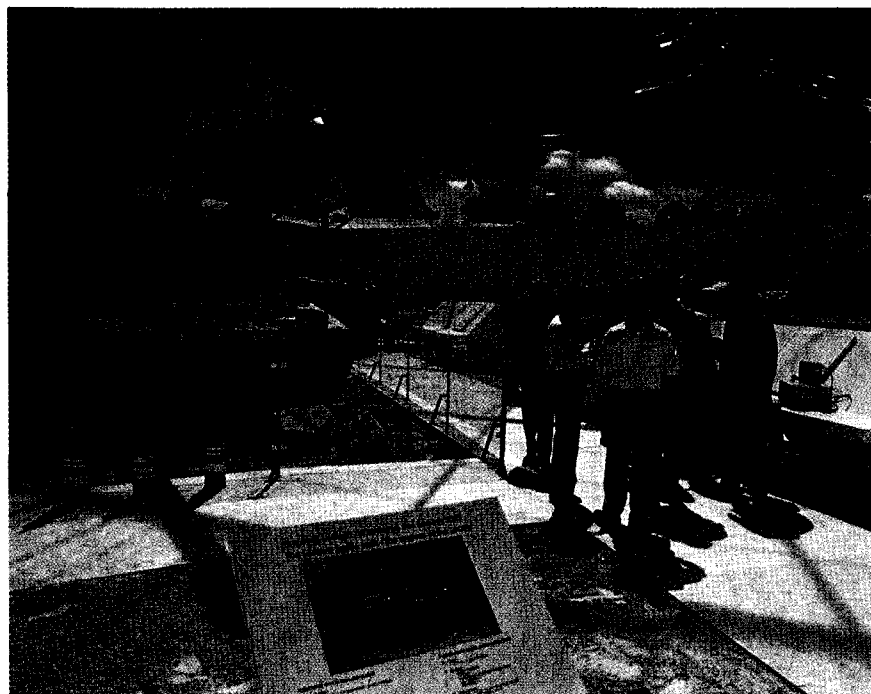
(Continued from page 38)

sponsible for their acts. Even if such sanctions are imposed, addressing the spread of conventional and chemical capabilities without dealing with other layers of proliferation is of little value.

THE NUCLEAR Non-Proliferation Treaty was signed in 1968 and came into force in 1970. The NPT was designed to keep the number of states with nuclear weapons stable at five—the United States, the Soviet Union, Britain, France, and China. The treaty calls for those who have nuclear weapons not to ship the equipment or transfer the technology necessary for other countries to develop nuclear weapons. To encourage support for the agreement, those countries that have signed the NPT have been helped to develop peaceful nuclear programs.

One hundred forty-three countries have ratified the NPT, but some of the most important have not done so. Only recently France, China, and South Africa have indicated that they plan to abide by the terms of the NPT, while Israel, India, Pakistan, Brazil, and Argentina refuse to do so. But just who has or has not signed seems in fact to have made little difference in the spread of nuclear weapons. An early signatory of the NPT, Iraq pursued an aggressive twenty-year program to obtain nuclear weapons, with much Western help, notably from Germany. India developed a nuclear capability in the early 1970s and has actually tested a nuclear device. Pakistan, after more than fifteen years of trying to develop nuclear weapons, has either succeeded or is on the brink. According to unconfirmed reports, Pakistan has agreed to share nuclear technology with Libya, North Korea, Taiwan, and Brazil.

In the face of such proliferation the Western nations have been unwilling to address the failure of the NPT. At the fourth five-year review conference of the NPT, in Geneva in August and September of last year, some progress was made. Suppliers of nuclear materials, such as Germany and Japan, agreed to sell them only to states observing internationally determined safeguards, and new measures were agreed on to improve the inspection capacity of the International Atomic Energy Agency. Iraq, as a signatory to



A French-built battle tank at the Satory Arms Exhibit, in France

the NPT, had its nuclear plant regularly inspected by the IAEA. Not inspected, however, were the centrifuge plant for enriching uranium and the factories spread around the country where materials to be used in the manufacture of nuclear weapons were being designed and made.

If countries have been able to ignore the institutions meant to govern the spread of chemical and nuclear weapons, they have often lacked the equipment to deliver the weapons to their target. This has brought about a whole new aspect of the arms race over the past ten years—the attempt by developing nations to acquire ballistic missiles. In testimony before Congress, Secretary of Defense Dick Cheney has warned that by the end of this decade at least fifteen developing countries will be able to build and deploy ballistic missiles, and that eight of those fifteen either already have or will soon have a nuclear capability. Scud missiles are currently in service in Syria, Egypt, Iran, Libya, and Yemen, and Iraq still has a significant number of launchers and missiles.

In April of 1987 the United States, Canada, France, Britain, Italy, Japan, and West Germany agreed to the Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR), intended to curb exports of missiles able to deliver nuclear weapons and of equipment that might be

used to develop such missiles. (Since 1987 Spain, Australia, Belgium, Luxembourg, and the Netherlands have agreed to participate.) The participants agreed not to export rocket systems, unmanned air-vehicle systems, or their components.

A number of Western intelligence agencies agreed to share information on any countries that appeared to be trying to acquire ballistic-missile technology. Even countries not participating in the MTCR have provided useful intelligence, but such actions are on a voluntary basis and rely on the good will of the volunteers.

IN THE AREAS of nuclear and chemical weapons and ballistic missiles some international controls exist, even if not all of them work as they should. But there is a new, far more frightening generation of weapons on the way.

Genetic engineering holds both hopeful and terrifying potential for humanity. It offers the real possibility of reducing famine, infant mortality, and poverty, but it also allows the production of weapons that could radically alter the nature of war.

The purpose of warfare is to conquer the enemy, by destroying his ability to wage war or by actually taking territory or both. In the Gulf War there was considerable praise for the precision weap-

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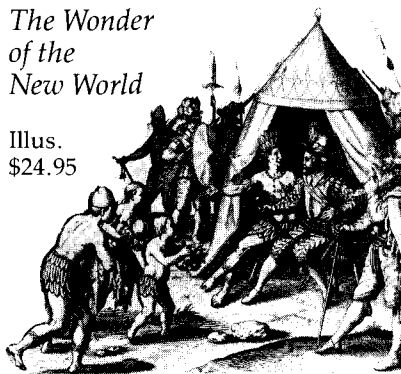
—Tzvetan Todorov

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ons employed by the allies, which hit their targets with pinpoint accuracy. Yet the allied coalition killed from 100,000 to 200,000 Iraqis, and not only destroyed the country's ability to wage war but also eliminated much of its industrial infrastructure. The war would have been less costly in money, lives, and economic potential if the allies had had a weapon that was *really* precise.

No commander *wants* to kill his enemy; he simply wants to make sure that his enemy does not kill him and that his own side wins. In the same way that the products of genetic engineering can control sickness or the performance of wheat, they can produce illness or destroy crops. Genetic engineering makes it possible to tailor toxins more precisely than ever before, and to generate them in nearly limitless quantities. For example, designer agents could be used in artillery shells intended to explode over an advancing force of infantry. Each load of agent could cause acute vomiting in the soldiers, making them unable to advance, or it could cause such instant and severe depression that none of them would be prepared to fight. Alternatively, a cruise missile could dispense an agent over a port or an industrial center to make all the civilians unconscious for twenty-four hours, disrupting reinforcements at the front and allowing an aggressor to capture vital territory virtually unopposed. For the past ten years Britain, the United States, and the Soviet Union have been studying the possibilities of designer agents as weapons of war.

It is a tradition in the arms business that what the superpowers develop one year, other countries begin to look at the next. Developing nations have recognized that chemical weapons combined with ballistic missiles can be a cheap, powerful, and accessible alternative to nuclear weapons. Genetic engineering affords an even cheaper alternative.

Before the Gulf War, Iraq had established the Al-Kindi Company for serum and vaccine production in Baghdad, had started a joint venture with Jordan and Saudi Arabia to establish the Arab Company for AntiBiotic Industries, had created a State Company for Drug Industries, and had announced that Iraqi biotechnologists were building a biological-research station in the southern marshes that

would include a genetics-research laboratory.

Currently no conventions, treaties, or other agreements effectively address the threat posed by genetically engineered weapons. In part this is because the science has emerged too recently for governments fully to understand the need for controls on the transfer of genetic technology. Also, difficulties encountered in trying to reduce the proliferation of chemical and nuclear weapons have discouraged the major powers from attempting to limit other weapons.

IT SEEMS CLEAR from the failures of the past that new systems are needed for policing the arms business at every level. In instances where governments have relied on the morality of their own companies to obey the law, or on other countries to behave decently, they have been disappointed. The carrot has been tried—for example, access to peaceful nuclear technology in return for signing the NPT. But it has failed. For almost every arms-control agreement there are countries and companies that have ignored it, either for reasons of political expediency or because they needed the money.

It is no longer enough to expect governments or companies to behave reasonably. What is needed is a new regime to deal with arms proliferation at all levels. Effective sanctions that make both countries and companies pay for breaching the terms of any agreement are required.

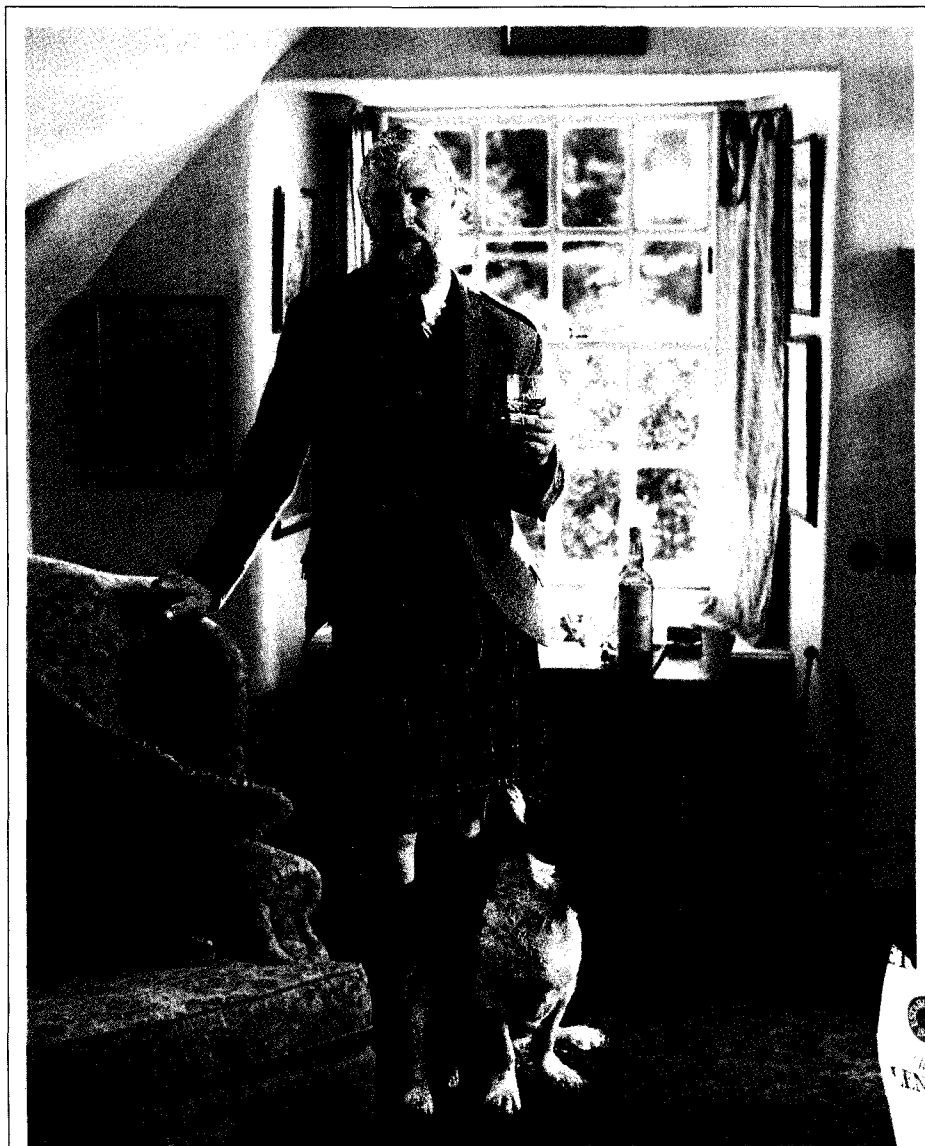
As a first step, the United States should be able to persuade close allies such as the United Kingdom and Germany to restrict exports of all kinds of weapons to developing nations, and to prosecute companies that break the rules. The United Nations could be enlisted to keep a comprehensive register of arms transfers, so that any violations of agreements could be exposed.

At a meeting of the seven leading industrialized nations, the so-called G7, in London last July, it was agreed that such a register should be set up. This was a useful step forward, but it appears that the register will be little different from the ones already kept by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute and the International Institute for Strategic Studies in Lon-



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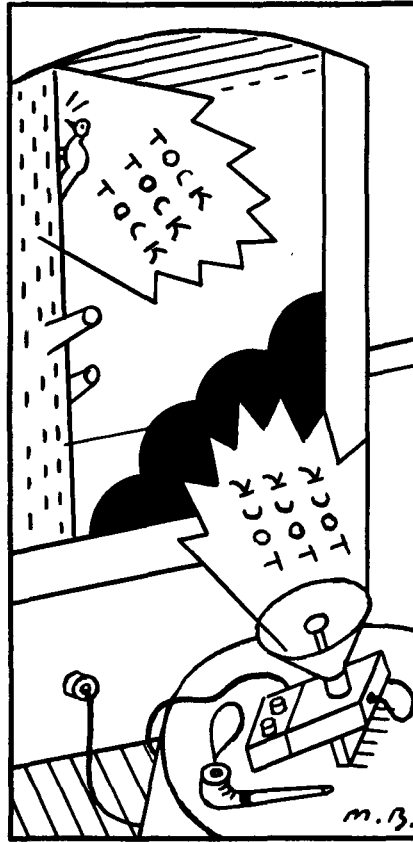
don. The G7 agreed that the rich nations will cut aid to those poorer nations deemed to be spending too much on arms. But this statement is virtually meaningless, since no definitions of rich and poor have been agreed on and no sanctions for persistent violators determined.

In the Middle East it is already clear that the United States, the architect of the new UN policy, is confused about how it should be implemented. Last May, President Bush announced a new initiative that called for the elimination of weapons of mass destruction from the region, a freeze on the acquisition, production, and testing of surface-to-surface missiles, and a policy of minimum deterrence that would restrict the amount of conventional weapons bought by any country. Less than twenty-four hours later Defense Secretary Cheney pledged additional military aid to Israel, including \$200 million for a new anti-missile system. Perhaps such arms sales are necessary to encourage moves toward a wider Middle East peace. But if the peace does not come, this aid package will hardly have encouraged Arab nations—Syria, for example—to show restraint in the future.

The growing competition in the arms market means that if the major powers step aside and agree to curbs on the weapons trade, other, less scrupulous countries will be eager to fill the orders. Indeed, the relative significance of the major powers as weapons suppliers is steadily being reduced in the face of this competition. For example, the U.S. share of the Middle East arms market, though lately on the upswing, fell in the late 1980s, with much of the difference being made up by suppliers in Europe, Latin America, South Africa, and China.

Clearly, the arms-control net needs to be widened. Arms producers among the developing nations, such as South Africa and Brazil, could be asked to join a voluntary agreement; if they refused to do so, and continued to sell arms without regard to the consequences, then sanctions could be applied. Such an ambitious policy has little prospect of surviving the elastic morality of day-to-day political decision-making. But it would be a useful start along what will undoubtedly be a long and difficult road.

—James Adams



TECHNOLOGY

Cut Out That Racket

"Active" noise-cancellation systems battle noise rather than just muffle it. So far their use is mostly industrial, but soon they will silence refrigerators and dishwashers—and maybe even your neighbors

MODERN technology may not have improved the world all that much, but it certainly has made life noisier. Unmuffled motorcycles, blaring car alarms, and roving boom boxes come first, second, and third on my list of most obnoxious noise offenders, but everyone could come up with his own version of aural hell—if he could just find a quiet spot to ponder the matter.

Yet what technology has done, other technology is now starting to undo, using computer power to zap those ear-splitting noises into silence. Previously silence-seekers had little recourse ex-

cept to stay inside, close the windows, and plug their ears. Remedies like these are quaintly termed "passive" systems, because they place physical barriers against the unwanted sound. Now computer technology is producing a far more effective "active" system, which doesn't just contain, deflect, or mask the noise but annihilates it electronically.

The system works by countering the offending noise with "anti-noise," a somewhat sinister-sounding term that calls to mind antimatter, black holes, and other *Popular Science* mind-benders but that actually refers to something quite simple. Just as a wave on a pond is flattened when it merges with a trough that is its exact opposite (or mirror image), so can a sound wave be negated by meeting its opposite.

This general theory of sound cancellation has been around since the 1930s. In the fifties and sixties it made for a kind of magic trick among laboratory acousticians playing around with the first clunky mainframe computers. The advent of low-cost, high-power microprocessors has made active noise-cancellation systems a commercial possibility, and a handful of small electronics firms in the United States and abroad are bringing the first ones onto the silence market.

Silence buffs might be hoping that the noise-canceling apparatus will take the shape of the .44 Magnum wielded by Dirty Harry, but in fact active sound control is not quite that active. The system might more properly be described as *reactive*, in that it responds to sound waves already headed toward human ears. In the configuration that is usual for such systems microphones detect the noise signal and send it to the system's microprocessor, which almost instantly models it and creates its inverse for loudspeakers to fire at the original. Because the two sounds occupy the same range of frequencies and tones, the inverse sounds exactly like the noise it is meant to eliminate: the anti-noise canceling Beethoven's Fifth Symphony is heard as Beethoven's Fifth. The only difference is that every positive pressure produced on the air by the orchestra is matched by a negative pressure produced by the computer, and every negative pressure is matched by a positive, thereby silencing the sound. The system is most effective as a kind of muffler, in which

microphones, microprocessor, and loudspeaker are all in a unit encasing the device that produces the sound, stifling it at its source. But it can work as a headset, too, negating the sound at the last moment before it disturbs one's peace of mind.

Active systems are potentially capable of handling the full range of audible frequencies, but they are currently most effective on the lower ones. Passive systems handle low frequencies poorly, because of low notes' power and remarkably long wavelengths—about fifteen feet for a C two octaves below middle C. (That's why the throbbing bass of a neighbor's rock music comes through the wall, but not the lilting melody.) With tight "coupling," by which noise and anti-noise are perfectly matched, the result is absolute silence, but usually some of the noise leaks through, or the anti-noise spills out. Still, active noise systems can cut up to 80 percent more noise than conventional mufflers. At that rate the roar of an industrial fan becomes a gentle whir—not absolutely silent, but acceptably quiet.

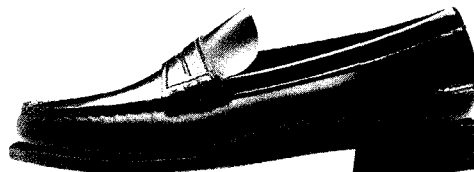
The technology has made its first appearances in the marketplace in certain narrow segments where the money for it is most forthcoming. Noise Cancellation Technologies, one of the leaders in the new field, has developed a noise-canceling headset for patients undergoing magnetic resonance imaging, a cross-sectional scanning technique that is extremely loud. It has also quieted the vacuum-powered machines used to unload grain by a large railroad transportation company called CSX, based in Richmond, Virginia. The device had produced as much noise as a jet at takeoff. When the active system was installed, the noise was reduced to "the hum of an air-conditioner," in the words of Roger Posey, the manager of operations at CSX.

In partnership with Walker Manufacturing, which makes automotive mufflers, NCT has begun producing electronic muffler prototypes for American and European automakers. The automakers are less interested in them for their silencing capabilities than for their ability to eliminate the "back pressure" placed on the engine by conventional mufflers as they force exhaust through many sound-absorbing chambers. Back pressure makes the engine work harder, cutting fuel



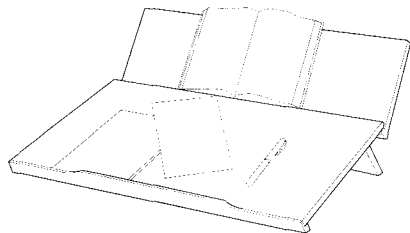
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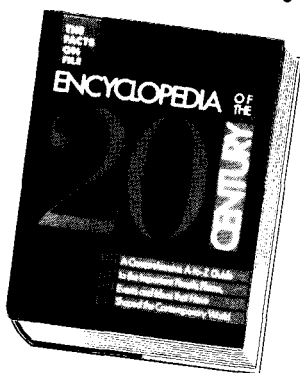
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efficiency. Tests performed by a laboratory certified by the Environmental Protection Agency have shown that active noise cancellation can improve fuel efficiency by one to two percent on the highway and five to six percent in the city. "In the automobile industry," says Michael Parrella, the president of NCT, "half a percent is considered significant fuel savings." Such an efficiency gain allows manufacturers to meet increasingly stringent congressional standards without cutting back on the number of profitable gas-guzzlers at the high end of the market. "The car manufacturers' interest is all the fuel savings," Parrella confides. "We're talking big business here. It has nothing to do with noise."

Some automobile manufacturers are more directly receptive to the sounds of silence, however. Lexus, hoping to enhance its reputation as one of the quietest cars on the road, has expressed interest in the products of a competing firm, called Active Noise and Vibration Technologies. After Porsche told ANVT's president, Tom Hesse, that its drivers *liked* to hear engine noise, ANVT developed a special Porsche version of the technology in which the sound cancellation quiets the engine only when the car's stereo system is playing.

Other systems are in development. At its Baltimore laboratory NCT has come up with a prototype of a product it calls the Silent Seat, an executive's chair equipped with anti-noise speakers to create a quiet zone for its occupant not very different from the one under the Cone of Silence in the old *Get Smart* TV show. To achieve the maximum quieting effect, however, one has to position one's head exactly at the midpoint between the two anti-noise speakers. When I sat in it, I had the eerie sensation that my head was a radio being tuned to the one silent station on the dial. The Silent Seat is intended for the cabins of especially noisy vehicles like trucks and helicopters, but NCT recognizes that such a chair might find its way into offices someday. "We've had a lot of requests," Parrella says.

Bose has come up with another solution to the same problem: an anti-noise headset. It employs two rings of silicon to provide an unusually tight seal, and supplements that passive barrier with an analog form of active noise control.

Dick Rutan and Jeana Yeager wore prototype Bose headsets to protect their hearing in the cockpit of the *Voyager* in their record-breaking around-the-world flight. (The electronics failed before the trip was over, but the tight seal on the ear cup did not, preventing any hearing loss.) NCT has entered into partnership with the Japanese manufacturer Foster Electric Company to produce Sony Walkman-style headsets for use in noisy industrial environments. In this version the computer technology is to be strapped around the user's waist; it will be battery-powered and lightweight.

DAZZLING AS the technology is, it may be an answer looking for a question. Noise, defined as unwanted sound, has been around for so long that people may have gotten used to it by now. The Romans imposed some of the first noise ordinances on record, restricting the nighttime driving of chariots, whose wooden wheels on the stone roads must have made a frightful racket. New York City was the first municipality to consider the noise problem in any organized way; it took the first community noise survey in 1929. Like most such surveys conducted since then, this one was never acted upon, because something more important came along to distract everyone's attention. Indeed, the level of national preoccupation with noise might be a leading indicator of good times. When Americans are overwhelmingly worried about noise, things are pretty much okay.

By that standard, the all-time high-water mark for American life may well have been reached in the 1970s, when federal preoccupation with the problem of noise attained its historical peak. In 1970 Congress created the Occupational Safety and Health Administration, and an important part of its agenda was to limit noise in the workplace. The Environmental Protection Agency, empowered by the 1972 Noise Control Act, which Congress passed overwhelmingly, established an Office of Noise Abatement and Control, with a staff of 130 and an annual budget of \$10 million.

But before the government could regulate noise in any sweeping way, someone had to figure out what noise was, and exactly what was so bad about it. Noise differs from other environ-



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mental pollutants in that it is both invisible and temporary: it leaves no bathtub ring. But noise resembles the others in that although noise is clearly terrible at an extreme, it is hard to say just where that extreme begins. Considerable research was done on the precise nature of the annoyance, much of which bordered on the self-evident. For example, one pair of psychologists demonstrated that someone was less likely to stop to help a stranger who had dropped books on the sidewalk if an earsplitting lawn mower was running nearby. Another group of psychologists discovered that business students evaluating résumés in a quiet room awarded higher salaries than other business students did in one where a lot of typewriters were clattering in the background. A third study examined a San Francisco neighborhood and discovered that people socialized with their neighbors more on quiet side streets than on noisy thoroughfares.

Other researchers busied themselves looking at the physiological consequences of noise, which proved little easier to measure. It has long been apparent that exposure to loud noise gradually causes deafness: the powerful vibrations damage the delicate hairs in the cochlea, which receive the sounds that are transmitted along the auditory nerve to the brain. But it has been more difficult to demonstrate other suspected connections, chiefly that of noise-related stress to heart disease. A team of researchers at the University of Miami found that protracted exposure to noise levels of 85 to 90 decibels, about lawn-mower level, raised the blood pressure of rhesus monkeys for at least four months after the period of exposure. Such tests have been difficult to conduct on human beings, however, since it is nearly impossible to isolate noise from other sources of stress. There is some evidence that loud noise might even be pleasurable, because it causes an adrenaline surge that can feel like a caffeine rush; this might explain why some people jack up the volume on their boom boxes. Another reason might be that they have gone deaf. An audiologist looking into why New York City sirens so frequently exceeded permissible noise levels determined that a number of the senior firefighters who were buying powerful sirens had lost much of their hearing.



Everyone is bothered by noise at earsplitting extremes, of course. But once the levels drop, or the screech becomes intermittent, the noise is open to interpretation. Any number of factors influence a person's reaction. One study showed that someone is less likely to be annoyed by highway noise if he believes that the highway is bringing an economic benefit—more customers, for instance, or higher property values. People are more bothered by airplane noise if they fear that the plane might crash in their neighborhood. Such attitudes can be manipulated to take the edge off noise. In Sweden the neighbors of an air-force base who had been given a souvenir booklet detailing the proud history of the service and its importance to Sweden were less likely to be annoyed by the noise than the neighbors who hadn't received the booklet.

Another, possibly more important, issue is control: few are irritated by the terrible din of thunderstorms, whereas many are irritated by equivalent noises that are man-made and presumably could be stopped. So it may make sense to conclude, as some psychologists have, that noise irritation is best thought of as a form of interpersonal

anger: the sufferer feels he has been not just bothered but wronged.

Such theorizing, however, ground pretty much to a halt in 1982, when the Reagan Administration closed the Office of Noise Abatement and Control as an example of useless Washington bureaucracy and struck noise from the list of pressing federal interests. There had been some unfortunate excesses. Alice Suter, a former employee of the office, admits that the EPA made "needless enemies" because of its "sometimes arrogant" style. Noise control was supposed to shift to the state and local levels, but those levels had their budgetary constraints as well. Without any federal agency to provide technical support, the entire field of noise control has dwindled away.

BUT NOISE remains, and it continues to increase. No nationwide statistics have ever been developed, but the acoustician William Galloway has argued persuasively that noise levels are simply a function of population density: people make noise, and so the more people, the more noise. It is possibly for this reason that in noise consciousness the United States still lags behind Europe, where population densities are significantly greater. The Occupational Safety and Health Administration set a national legal standard of 90 decibels as the maximum level that workers should be allowed to endure over an eight-hour work period. Noise restrictions in the European Community begin five decibels lower. Since the decibel scale is logarithmic, a five-decibel difference means about a 25 percent reduction in loudness.

In the United States noise awareness centers on airports, specifically in the unending NIMBY controversies over where new airports should be built. "Noise is *the* major issue in airport expansion," says Kenneth Feith, a senior scientist and noise specialist with the EPA. As it is, airports have to conform to thirty-seven categories of noise "procedures," including state and local noise ordinances, restrictions against specific aircraft types, weight limitations, thrust requirements, and nighttime curfews.

Highway traffic noise is probably the second most agonizing form, as evidenced by the increasing number of noise barriers being placed along the



nation's highways. According to Robert Armstrong, a senior noise specialist at the Federal Highway Administration, it costs nearly \$1 million a mile to put up a typical barrier. More than half a billion dollars has been spent to build noise barriers along 720 miles of state roads. And industrial noise, especially in construction (those jackhammers) and in manufacturing (those punch presses), runs third.

All these areas are potential markets for active noise control. Headset versions of the technology are already available for use inside noisy factories, and mufflerlike versions can quiet the machinery. A company called Applied Acoustic Research, managed by Glenn Warnaka, one of the original patent holders in noise cancellation, is working on a prototype highway anti-noise system that would replace concrete barriers with a series of noise-control systems spaced at regular intervals along the highway—and open the views besides. Michael Parrella believes that his systems could someday cut the “tire whine” that is a major

component of road noise, thus quieting the ride for drivers and passengers as well. He also believes that noise cancellation could muffle jets, but that would be more difficult, because jet roar shifts according to the Doppler effect (which causes pitch to drop as a noise source moves away), and complicated harmonics and fiendishly high temperatures are also involved.

None of the anti-noise companies has plans to enter the private-household market directly any time soon. NCT is working to quiet sloshing dishwashers, grinding refrigerator compressors, and rattly oven fans in the belief that, with “open plans” exposing more of the household to kitchen noise, consumers would prefer quiet products. The company has recently signed an agreement with the Sweden-based AB Electrolux, the parent company of Frigidaire (refrigerators) and Eureka (vacuum cleaners), as a step in this direction. Parrella claims that NCT products could someday insulate homes from street noise and loud neighbors as well. “All we need to do is

find a good partner,” he says. The system would dampen window panes, which are the major source of incoming sound. Windows act like stereo speakers, transmitting sound by vibration. Anti-vibration devices can negate the vibration exactly the way anti-noise devices cancel sound. NCT and other companies currently produce anti-vibration devices to still automobile engine mounts. By the same principle, an anti-vibration screen can be mounted on a wall, ceiling, door, or window to silence a loud neighbor.

Seductive as the technology may appear, one should not get carried away by it. The more one thinks about noise, the worse it gets. Michael Parrella himself has been in the noise field for six years, and the experience has drastically heightened his noise sensitivity. Now that the firm's mini-van is silenced electronically, he is bothered by the gentle whoosh of the air-conditioner. “I'll be honest with you,” he says. “Noise didn't used to get to me. But now it drives me nuts.”

—John Sedgwick



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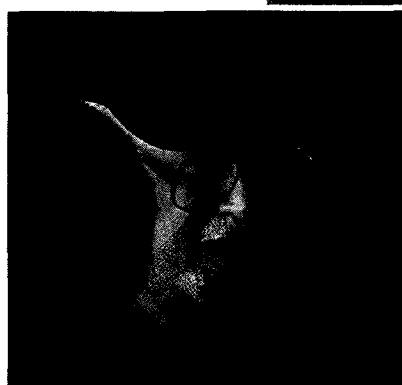
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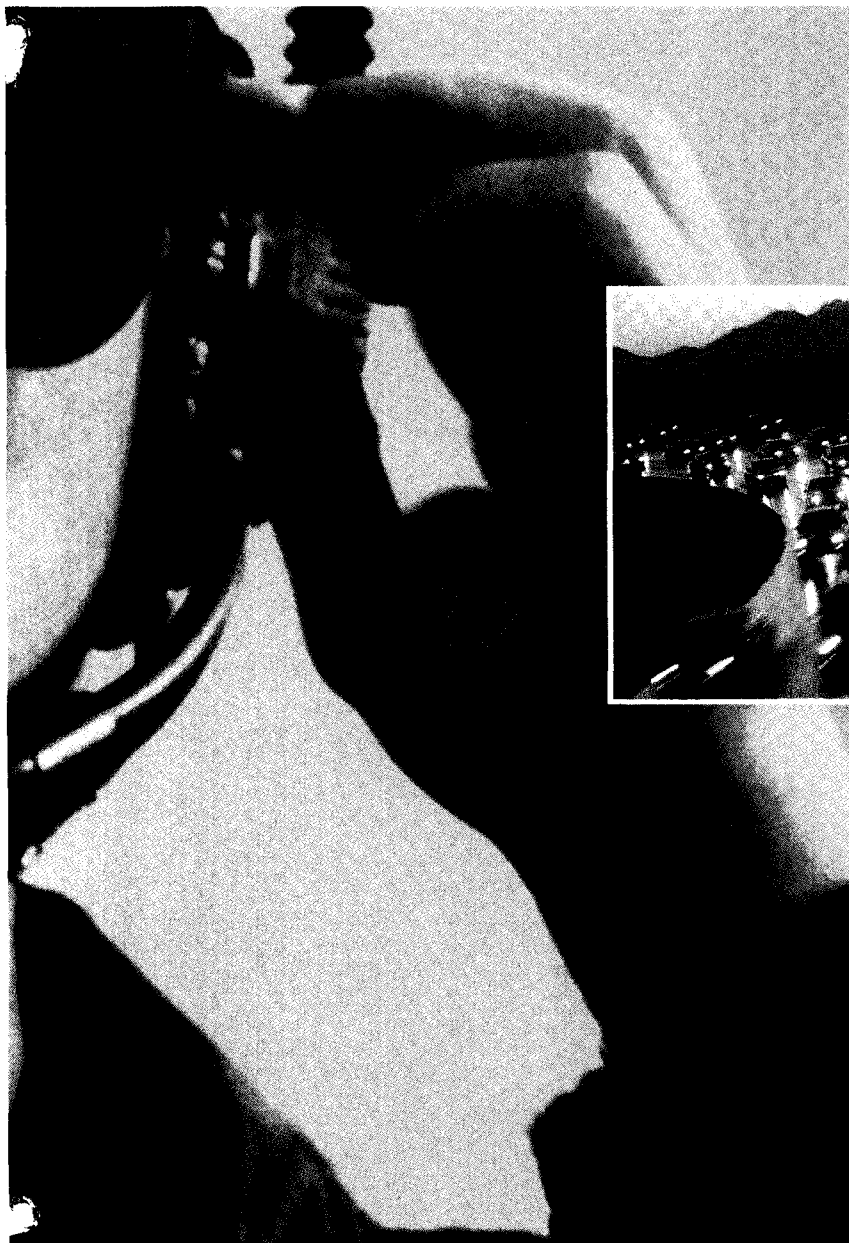
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A college professor looks at the forgotten victims of our mediocre educational system—the potentially high achievers whose SAT scores have fallen, and who read less, understand less of what they read, and know less than the top students of a generation ago

THE OTHER CRISIS IN AMERICAN EDUCATION

BY DANIEL J. SINGAL



TWO CRISES ARE STALKING AMERICAN EDUCATION. Each poses a major threat to the nation's future. The two are very different in character and will require separate strategies if we wish to solve them; yet to date, almost without exception, those concerned with restoring excellence to our schools have lumped them together.

The first crisis, which centers on disadvantaged minority children attending inner-city schools, has received considerable attention, as well it should. Put simply, it involves students whose habitat makes it very difficult for them to learn. The key issues are more social than educational. These children clearly need dedicated teachers and a sound curriculum, the two staples of a quality school, but the fact remains that most of them will not make significant progress until they also have decent housing, a better diet, and a safer environment in which to live.

The second crisis, in contrast, is far more academic than social and to a surprising extent invisible. It involves

approximately half the country's student population—the group that educators refer to as “college-bound.” Although the overwhelming majority of these students attend suburban schools, a fair number can be found in big-city or consolidated rural districts, or in independent or parochial schools. Beginning in the mid-1970s these students have been entering college so badly prepared that they have performed far below potential, often to the point of functional disability. We tend to assume that with their high aptitude for learning, they should be able to fend for themselves. However, the experience of the past fifteen years has proved decisively that they can't.

For most people, any mention of the problems of American education almost immediately conjures up an image of the wretched conditions in the stereotypical urban ghetto school. But can we really explain the sharp decline in college-entrance-exam scores by pointing to the inner cities, where only a tiny fraction of students

even take the Scholastic Aptitude Test, or SAT? Do so many freshmen entering prestigious institutions like Harvard and Berkeley display a limited mastery of basic historical facts, not to mention of their own language, because they come from crime-ridden neighborhoods or school districts with no tax base?

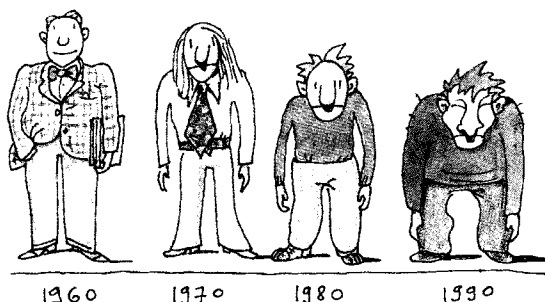
If one looks at the aggregate statistics of American education from this perspective, the full dimensions of this other crisis become strikingly apparent. Consider the recent history of the Stanford Achievement Test, which has long served as one of the main instruments for measuring pupil progress in our schools. According to Herbert Rudman, a professor of educational psychology at Michigan State University and a co-author of the test for more than three decades, from the 1920s to the late 1960s American children taking the Stanford made significant gains in their test performance. They made so much progress, in fact, that as the test was revised each decade, the level of difficulty of the questions was increased substantially, reflecting the increasing level of challenge of the instructional materials being used in the schools.

From the late 1960s to the early 1980s, however, we managed to squander the better part of that progress, with the greatest losses coming in the high schools. During the past few years the Stanford and other test results have shown some improvement in math and science, and in language skills at the elementary school level. But there has been little or no movement in the verbal areas among junior high and high school students, and seasoned test interpreters have also seen a tendency for the gains made in the early years of school to wash out as the child becomes older. In effect, the test numbers substantiate what the National Commission on Excellence in Education concluded—quoting the education analyst Paul Copperman—in 1983 in *A Nation at Risk*: “Each generation of Americans has outstripped its parents in education, in literacy, and in economic attainment. For the first time in the history of our country, the educational skills of one generation will not surpass, will not equal, will not even approach, those of their parents.”

The blame for this wholesale decline in test scores is often put on a throng of underachieving minority students thought to have been pulling down national test averages, but in fact just the opposite is true. To be sure, it is possible to attribute much of the relatively small initial drop in SAT scores, from 1963 to 1970, to the fact that blacks and other minorities began taking the test in larger numbers during those years, but since then the composition of the test population has not changed in any way that would dramatically affect test scores. Most important, blacks have made gradual but significant gains in the past two decades, as measured by school achievement tests like the Stanford and by college-entrance exams. Although their average scores still fall substantially below those of whites, their combined (verbal and math) SAT scores rose by 49 points during the 1980s alone.

“Perhaps the most untold story of American education in the past few years is the achievement of black students,” Gregory R. Anrig, the president of the Educational Testing Service, declares. “The hard data are encouraging.” The sad irony, of course, is that this progress came at a time when the Reagan Administration was proposing drastic cuts in the amount of federal scholarship aid available to students from low-income families, most likely leading many young blacks to believe that a college education was not within their reach.

While students in the bottom quartile have shown slow but steady improvement since the 1960s, average test scores have nonetheless gone down, primarily because of the performance of those in the top quartile. This “highest cohort of achievers,” Rudman writes, has shown “the greatest declines across a variety of subjects as well as across age-level groups.” Analysts have also found “a substantial drop among those children in the middle range of achievement,” he continues, “but less loss and some modest gains at the lower levels.” In other words, our brightest youngsters, those most likely to be headed for selective colleges, have suffered the most dramatic setbacks over the past two decades—a fact with grave implications for our ability to compete with other nations in the future. If this is true—and abundant evidence exists to suggest that it is—then we indeed have a second major crisis in our education system.



Sixty Lost Points on the SAT

LOOK AT WHAT HAS HAPPENED ON THE SAT, A test that retains its well-deserved status as the most important educational measuring device in America. Despite the test's many critics, the number of colleges relying on the SAT keeps increasing, because it provides such an accurate gauge of the basic skills needed for college-level work, among them reading comprehension, vocabulary, and the ability to reason with mathematical concepts. The SAT also has the virtue of having a rock-steady scoring system: it is calibrated, by the College Board, so that a score earned in 1991 will represent almost exactly the same level of performance as it did in, say, 1961. Thus, by tracking the percentage of students coming in above the benchmark of 600 on the College Board scale (which runs from 200 to 800), one

can get a good sense of how the country's most capable students have fared over the years.

The news is not encouraging. In 1972, of the high school seniors taking the SAT 11.4 percent had verbal scores over 600; by 1983 the number had dropped to 6.9 percent, and, despite modest gains in the mid-1980s, it remains in that disheartening vicinity. That's a decline of nearly 40 percent. The decline since the mid-1960s has probably been closer to 50 percent, but unfortunately the College Board changed its reporting system in 1972, and earlier data isn't available. The math SAT presents a somewhat different story. Though the percentage scoring over 600 dropped from 17.9 in 1972 to 14.4 by 1981, it has climbed back up to 17.9 in 1991. However, an influx of high-scoring Asian-American students (who now make up eight percent of those taking the test, as compared with two percent in 1972) has apparently had much to do with this recent upsurge.

To grasp what these national figures really mean, it helps to approach them from the standpoint of the individual student. How, we should ask, would the drop in SAT scores affect a typical top-quartile senior at a well-regarded suburban high school in 1991? To my knowledge, no published studies have addressed this question, but the available information, including my own research, suggests that our hypothetical senior would come in roughly fifty to sixty points lower on the verbal section and twenty-five points lower on the math than he or she would have in 1970.

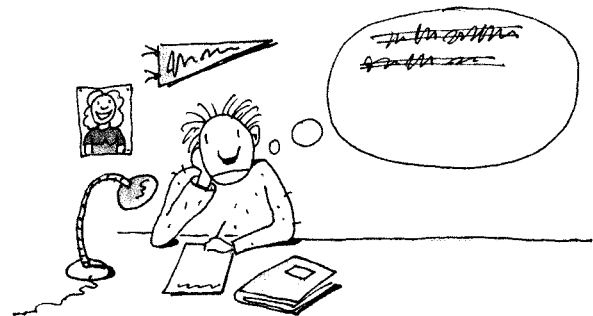
Consider the trend in average freshman scores at selective colleges. Indeed, perusing a twenty-year-old edition of *Barron's Profiles of American Colleges* is an experience equivalent to entering a different world, with tuitions much lower and SAT scores much higher than at most schools today. In 1970 students arriving at top-ranked institutions like Columbia College, Swarthmore College, the University of Chicago, and Pomona College posted average verbal SATs from 670 to 695; by the mid-1980s the scores ranged from 620 to 640, and they have stayed roughly in that neighborhood ever since. The same pattern appears at colleges a notch or two lower in the academic hierarchy. To take a few examples from different geographic areas, from 1970 to 1987 average verbal scores went from 644 to 570 at Hamilton College, from 607 to 563 at Washington University, from 600 to 560 at the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor, and from 560 to 499 at the University of California at Santa Barbara.

The point is *not* that these particular schools have slipped in their relative standings. They all currently receive ratings the same as or higher than those they received twenty years ago from *Barron's* in terms of competition for admission. One could pick almost any selective institution at random and find the same trend (an exception: the stronger schools in the South, where test scores held steady or rose in the wake of desegregation). Nor can one attribute the drop in scores to a change in the size of the test

population or in the percentage of high school seniors taking the SAT (the latter figure has risen significantly only in the past few years, too recently to have affected the 1987 scores). To be sure, an increase in the number of minority students attending these institutions has been a factor, but the basic problem remains: with a 40 percent decline in the proportion of students scoring over 600, there are far fewer high-scoring students to go around.

But do these numbers matter? Does a loss of sixty points on the verbal SAT translate into a significant difference in a student's educational experience at college? The testimony of those who teach at the college level suggests that the answer is yes. When a national poll in 1989 asked professors whether they thought undergraduates were "seriously underprepared in basic skills," 75 percent said yes and only 15 percent said no. The same poll asked whether institutions of higher learning were spending "too much time and money teaching students what they should have learned in high school." Sixty-eight percent said yes. Professors feel like this, I should add, not because they are old scolds given to grouching about students but because their work brings them into daily contact with the manifold ways in which the American education system has failed these young people.

Those who tend to dismiss those sixty lost SAT points as insignificant haven't seen a college term paper lately. It's not that freshmen in 1991 are unable to read or write. Most of them possess what the National Assessment of Educational Progress calls "satisfactory" skills in this area. But is that enough for college? Do they have sufficient command of the English language to comprehend a college-level text, think through a complex issue, or express a reasonably sophisticated argument on paper? Those of us who were teaching in the early 1970s can attest that the overwhelming majority of freshmen at the more selective colleges arrived with such "advanced" skills. Now only a handful come so equipped.



The Context of Ignorance

TAKE READING, FOR EXAMPLE. "WHILE THE NATION'S students have the skills to derive a surface understanding of what they read," the NAEP recently reported, "they have difficulty when asked to defend or elaborate upon this surface un-

 *Our brightest youngsters, those most likely to be headed for selective colleges, have suffered the most dramatic setbacks over the past two decades—a fact with grave implications for our ability to compete with other nations in the future.*

derstanding.” That’s what most college faculty would say. Emilia da Costa, a Latin America specialist who has taught at Yale for the past eighteen years, estimates that whereas 70 percent of her students can pick out the general theme of an essay or a book, only 25 percent come away with in-depth comprehension of what they read. David Samson, a former lecturer in history and literature at Harvard, likewise observes, “No one reads for nuance. They pay no attention to detail.” My own experience confirms this. Countless times I have been amazed at how little students have managed to glean from a book I know they have read, to the point where they are often unable to recall the names of prominently mentioned figures. So much escapes them; even those of above-average ability absorb no more than a dusting of detail from a printed text. And without such detailed information it’s impossible for them to gain a real understanding of what the author is saying.

Equally distressing is the rate at which today’s students read. A friend of mine at the University of Michigan remembers that in the 1960s the normal assignment in his courses was one book a week. Now he allows two to three weeks for each title. He has also reluctantly had to adjust the level of difficulty of his assignments: even a journalist like Walter Lippmann is too hard for most freshmen and sophomores these days, he finds. Again, this is typical. Twelve to fifteen books over a fifteen-week semester used to be the rule of thumb at selective colleges. Today it is six to eight books, and they had better be short texts, written in relatively simple English.

As one might expect, students who don’t read at an advanced level can’t write well either. Their knowledge of grammar is not bad, according to Richard Marius, the director of the expository writing program at Harvard, but “the number of words available to express their thoughts is very, very limited, and the forms by which they express themselves are also very limited.” The average incoming Harvard student, he observes, has a “utilitarian command of language” resulting in sentences that follow a simple subject-predicate, subject-predicate format with little variation or richness of verbal expression. Harvard, of course, gets the cream of the crop. Those of us teaching at lesser institutions would be happy with utilitarian but serviceable prose from our freshmen. More often we get mangled sentences, essays composed without the slightest sense of paragraphing, and writing that can’t sustain a thought for more than half a page.

Along with this impoverishment of language comes a

downturn in reasoning skills. Da Costa laments that students are no longer trained in logical analysis, and consequently have difficulty using evidence to reach a conclusion. R. Jackson Wilson finds this to be the greatest change he has observed during a quarter century of teaching history at Smith College. “Students come to us having sat around for twelve years expressing attitudes toward things rather than analyzing,” he says. “They are always ready to tell you how they feel about an issue, but they have never learned how to construct a rational argument to defend their opinions.” Again, these complaints are amply substantiated by data from the National Assessment of Educational Progress. On one test of analytic writing measuring “the ability to provide evidence, reason logically, and make a well-developed point,” only *four tenths of one percent* of eleventh graders performed at the “elaborated” (what I believe should be considered college-freshman) level.

Finally, no account of the present condition of college students would be complete without mention of the extraordinary dearth of factual knowledge they bring to college. Horror stories on this topic abound—and they are probably all true. I will never forget two unusually capable juniors, one of whom was a star political-science major, who came to my office a few years ago to ask what was this thing called the New Deal. I had made reference to it during a lecture on the assumption that everyone in the class would be well acquainted with Franklin Roosevelt’s domestic program, but I was wrong: the two students had checked with their friends, and none of them had heard of the New Deal either. Another junior recently asked me to help him pick a twentieth-century American novelist on whom to write a term paper. He had heard vaguely of F. Scott Fitzgerald and Ernest Hemingway, but did not recognize the names of Sinclair Lewis, John Dos Passos, Norman Mailer, William Styron, and Saul Bellow.

Indeed, one can’t assume that college students know anything anymore. Paula Fass, a professor of history at the University of California at Berkeley, remains astonished that sophomores and juniors in her upper-level course on American social history are often unable to differentiate between the American Revolution and the Civil War, but rather see them as two big events that happened way back in the past. Alan Heimert, a veteran member of the Harvard English department, encounters the same mushy grasp of historical knowledge and blames it on the “trendy social-studies curriculum” now taught in most high schools which covers broad thematic

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topics rather than history. "They are aware that someone oppressed someone else," he says with only slight exaggeration, "but they aren't sure exactly what took place and they have no idea of the order in which it happened."

Though not always recognized, a direct connection exists between this deficit in factual knowledge and the decline in verbal skills. Most reading, after all, is at bottom a form of information processing in which the mind selects what it wants to know from the printed page and files it away for future use. In conducting that operation of selecting, interpreting, and storing information, the reader constantly relies on his or her previous stock of knowledge as a vital frame of reference. No matter how fascinating or valuable a new detail might be, a person finds it almost impossible to hold in memory and have available for retrieval unless it can be placed in some kind of larger context. Providing that basic intellectual scaffolding used to be a major function of a good high school education. Year-long survey courses in history and literature, covering the United States, Europe, and the world, were designed to ensure that college-bound students would have the necessary background to make sense of the new subject matter they would encounter in college. Yet few high schools today teach that kind of curriculum.

Little wonder that so many students experience great difficulty in absorbing detail; since they have no context in which to fit what they read, it quickly flows out of their minds. Unable to retain much, they find little profit in reading, which leads them to read less, which in turn makes it harder for them to improve their reading skills.

One often hears this generation accused of laziness. They don't perform well in school or college or later on the job, it is said, because they lack motivation. I don't happen to subscribe to that theory. The percentage of students who are truly lazy—that is, who simply have an aversion to work—is probably no greater today than it has been in the past. The real problem, I'm convinced, is that college-bound youngsters over the past two decades have not received the quality education they deserve. As R. Jackson Wilson observes of his students at Smith, this generation is typically "good-spirited, refreshingly uncowed by teachers' authority, and very willing to work." They enter college with high ambitions, only to find those ambitions dashed in many cases by inadequate skills and knowledge. The normal activities required to earn a bachelor's degree—reading, writing, researching, and reasoning—are so difficult for them that a large number (I would guess a majority at most schools) simply give up in frustration. Some actually leave; the rest go through the motions, learning and contributing little, until it's time to pick up their diplomas. We rightly worry about the nation's high school dropouts. Perhaps we should worry as well about these silent college "dropouts."



How Good Schools Buck the Trend

WHAT HAS CAUSED THIS GREAT DECLINE IN our schools? The multitude of reports that now fill the library shelves tend to designate "social factors" as the prime culprit. Television usually heads the list, followed by rock music, the influence of adolescent peer groups, the increase in both single-parent families and households where both parents work, and even faulty nutrition.

Those who attribute the loss of academic performance to social factors don't take account of the small number of high schools around the country that have managed to escape the downturn. Some are posh private academies; a few are located in blue-collar neighborhoods. What they have in common is a pattern of stable or even rising test scores at a time when virtually all the schools around them experienced sharp declines. There is no indication that the children attending these exceptional schools watched significantly fewer hours of television, listened to less heavy-metal music, were less likely to have working mothers, or ate fewer Big Macs than other children. Rather, they appear to have had the good fortune to go to schools that were intent on steering a steady course in a time of rapid change, thus countering the potentially negative impact of various social factors.

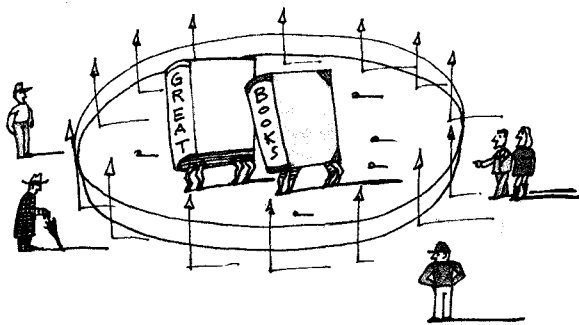
It would seem obvious good sense to look closely at this select group of schools to determine what they have been doing right, but as far as I can determine this has been done in only two national studies. The better one was issued by the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP) in 1978, under the somewhat pedestrian title *Guidelines for Improving SAT Scores*. Now out of print and hard to find, it contains one of the most perceptive diagnoses available of the underlying malady in our schools.

The report identifies one main characteristic that successful schools have shared—the belief that academics must invariably receive priority over every other activity. "The difference comes," we are told, "from a singular commitment to academic achievement for the college-bound student." These schools did not ignore the other dimensions of student life. By and large, the NASSP found, schools that maintained excellence in academics sought to be excellent in everything else they did; they

"proved to be apt jugglers, keeping all important balls in the air." But academic work came first.

Two other factors help account for the prowess of these schools in holding the line against deterioration. The first is a dogged reliance on a traditional liberal-arts curriculum. In an era of mini-courses and electives, the tiny group of high schools that kept test scores and achievement high continued to require year-long courses in literature and to encourage enrollment in rigorous math classes, including geometry and advanced algebra. Though the learning environment in those schools was often "broad and imaginative," in the words of the NASSP, fundamentals such as English grammar and vocabulary received heavy stress. The other key factor in preserving academic quality was the practice of grouping students by ability in as many subjects as possible. The contrast was stark: schools that had "severely declining test scores" had "moved determinedly toward heterogeneous grouping" (that is, mixed students of differing ability levels in the same classes), while the "schools who have maintained good SAT scores" tended "to prefer homogeneous grouping."

If attaining educational excellence is this simple, why have these high-quality schools become so rare? The answer lies in the cultural ferment of the 1960s.



The Incubus of the Sixties

IN EVERY CONCEIVABLE FASHION THE REIGNING ethos of those times was hostile to excellence in education. Individual achievement fell under intense suspicion, as did attempts to maintain standards. Discriminating among students on the basis of ability or performance was branded "elitist." Educational gurus of the day called for essentially nonacademic schools, whose main purpose would be to build habits of social cooperation and equality rather than to train the mind. A good education, it was said, maximized the child's innate spontaneity, creativity, and affection for others. To the extent that logic and acquired knowledge interfered with that process, they were devalued.

This populist tidal wave receded by the late 1970s, but the mediocrity it left in its wake remains. The extent of the devastation has varied by subject area: math and the natural sciences, which continue to be blessed with rela-

tively widespread agreement on what should be taught, have escaped the worst damage (though test scores in these areas still fall below average in comparisons with scores in other industrialized nations), while English and history now lie in ruins in all too many schools. The latter, of course, are the disciplines primarily responsible for inculcating verbal skills and for supplying the broad framework of knowledge that students need for success in college. Yet it is precisely in these areas that the spirit of the sixties remains most evident, hovering over the high schools and junior highs like a ghost.

Consider the teaching of English. The Great Books, of course, are out of fashion. A few get assigned as a token gesture, but are rarely set in chronological order. The results of a questionnaire I recently distributed at Hobart and William Smith Colleges suggest that less than a quarter of the college-bound population now gets a real year-long survey of American literature, with probably no more than 15 percent taking such a course in British or European literature. Instead, students all too often are given works that, as the English department at one highly ranked independent school puts it, are "age-appropriate" and "reflect [a] concern for social pluralism." "Age-appropriate" means giving students assignments "that reflect their interests as adolescents, that they can read without constant recourse to a dictionary, and from which they can take whatever they are inspired to take."

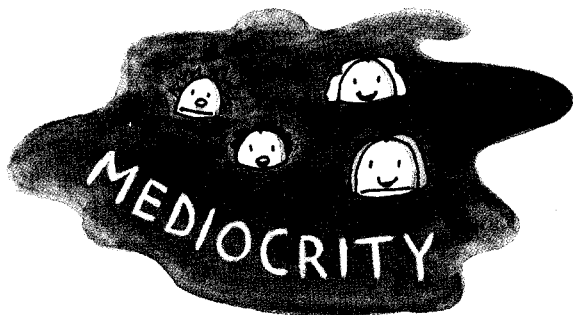
Nor are they asked to read much. Most ninth- and tenth-grade English reading lists are limited to four or five titles a year. According to Arthur N. Applebee, the director of the National Research Center on Literature Teaching and Learning, the typical college-bound high school student reads only sixty-five pages a week (even with Advanced Placement courses factored in), or less than ten pages a night. A check of the typical high school curriculum would disclose that plays are favorite choices these days (they tend to be much shorter than novels and make easier reading), along with personal memoirs. The rich diet of fiction and poetry that used to be served up—Dickens, Twain, Poe, Hawthorne, Shakespeare, Chaucer, Thoreau, Dickinson, Milton, Melville, and Steinbeck—is increasingly hard to find.

These changes in the teaching of literature matter greatly because reading is the primary vehicle by which students absorb the rhythms and patterns of language. The more a person encounters sophisticated prose, the more he or she will pick up varied sentence structure, vocabulary in context, and even spelling, as well as advanced descriptive techniques and narrative strategies. Feed a student the literary equivalent of junk food and you will get an impoverished command of English, which is what we too often see in the current crop of college freshmen. And yet, because most new teachers these days are themselves the product of this new English curriculum, the trend continues to run the wrong way.

The rest of the English curriculum also reflects the im-

part of the sixties. If the reports I get from my students are accurate, it would appear that formal drills on grammar, vocabulary, spelling, and diction are infrequent these days. Teachers may toss an occasional drill into the schedule to keep parents satisfied, but the assumption is that students will absorb these things automatically from their reading. Given what students currently read, however, that's a dubious assumption. As for writing, when it is assigned (there seems to be wide variation among schools on this), it tends to take the form of "personal expression"—with assignments calling for first-person narratives that describe what the student has seen, felt, or experienced. Essays in which the writer marshals evidence to support a coherent, logical argument are all too rare. Since that kind of exercise might dampen creativity, it must be minimized. The outcome is utterly predictable. "Analytic writing was difficult for students in all grades," the National Assessment of Educational Progress noted in summarizing the results of its various writing tests in 1984, while students "had less difficulty with tasks requiring short responses based on personal experience."

In sum, this is a generation whose members may be better equipped to track the progress of their souls in diaries than any group of Americans since the Puritans. But as for writing papers in college, or later producing the sorts of documents that get the world's work done, that's another story. In contrast, a survey conducted by the Educational Testing Service in the mid-1960s, just before countercultural innovations swept away the old curriculum, discovered that over twice as many high school students of that era said that they "frequently" wrote papers criticizing the literary works they were studying (a valuable pedagogic strategy because it forces the student to become a much closer reader) as said that they "frequently" wrote papers based on personal experience.



The Shock of College-Level Demands

THE SAME TENDENCY APPEARS IN OTHER KEY subjects. Students headed for college used to get a solid grasp of both American and European history at the high school level. Now, as most people are aware, they pass through an array of social-studies courses designed to impress upon them the

central values of the sixties, including concern for the natural environment, respect for people of different racial and ethnic groups, and women's rights. These values are important and should certainly be included in the curriculum. But teaching them in such a superficial manner, devoid of any historical context, simply doesn't work—as the alarming increase in racist and sexist incidents that has plagued college campuses in the past few years would suggest. Above all, this spotty social-studies approach deprives students of that vital base of in-depth knowledge they must have to succeed as undergraduates.

Accompanying this pervasive dumbing-down of the curriculum has been a wholesale change in school philosophy. In place of "stretching" students, the key objective in previous eras, the goal has become not to "stress" them. One hears again and again that kids growing up "need time to smell the roses." (That they are more likely to spend their free hours in front of a television or cruising a shopping mall seems never to be considered.) Placing serious academic demands on them, it is thought, might impede their natural development and perhaps even render them neurotic. But the stress they avoid in high school often comes back to haunt them in college. An extensive survey of college freshmen recently found that an increasing number say they are "overwhelmed by all I have to do." "We have very high suicide rates among college students now," the survey's director, Alexander Astin, says. This should come as no surprise: having had little previous experience with stress, students are not well equipped to face the normal and necessary pressures of either college or the "real world."

Perhaps most crucial, the sixties mentality, with its strong animus against what it defines as "elitism," has shifted the locus of concern in American education from high to low achievers. All over the country, educators today typically judge themselves by how well they can reach the least-able student in the system, the slowest one in the class. Programs to help the culturally disadvantaged and the learning-disabled have proliferated, while those for the gifted receive no more than token interest.

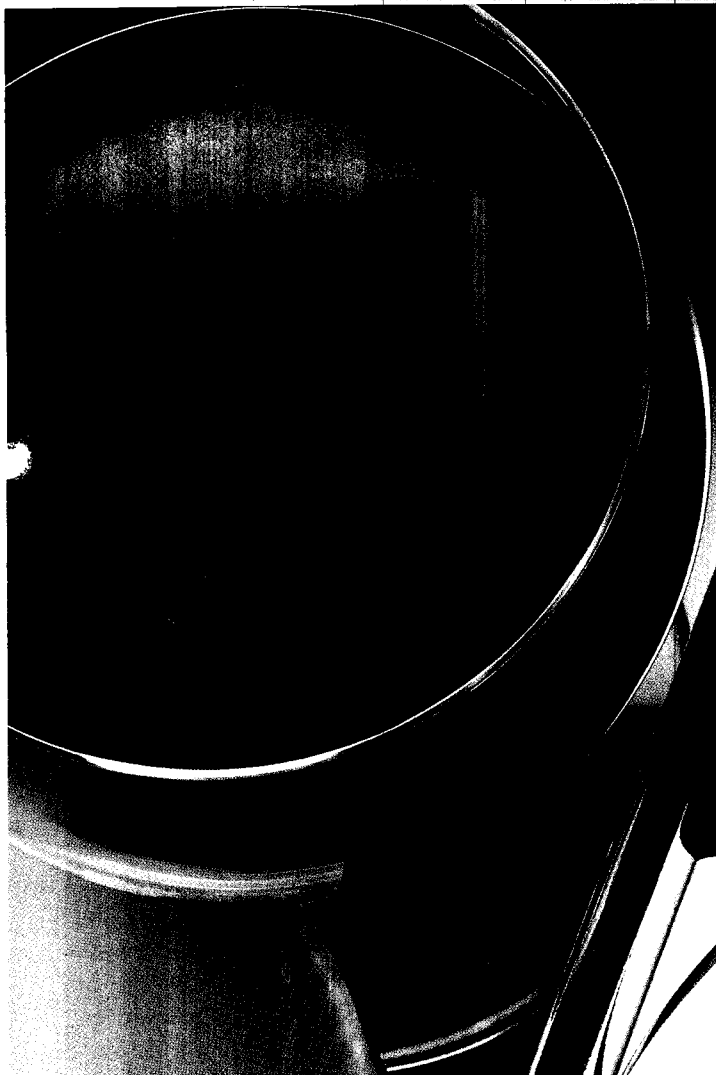
The prevailing ideology holds that it is much better to give up the prospect of excellence than to take the chance of injuring any student's self-esteem. Instead of trying to spur children on to set high standards for themselves, teachers invest their energies in making sure that slow learners do not come to think of themselves as failures. These attitudes have become so ingrained that in conversations with teachers and administrators one often senses a virtual prejudice against bright students. There is at times an underlying feeling, never articulated, that such children start off with too many advantages, and that it would be just as well to hold them back until their less fortunate contemporaries catch up with them. At a minimum, the assumption goes, students of above-average ability will in due course find their way to classy col-

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leges and thus don't need any special consideration from their schools.

In adopting this posture, one must remember, the education profession has simply been carrying out its social mandate. In the wake of the sixties the country seemed to be telling the schools that the prime mission now was to produce equality rather than excellence—to lift up those on the bottom, whether they were there because of race, class, ethnicity, or low ability. As the test scores tell us, the education establishment took this mission to heart. Those in the bottom quartile have shown slow but steady progress, while those in the top quartile have exhibited a sharp decline. Only since the appearance of *A Nation at Risk*, in 1983, with its warning about “a rising tide of mediocrity” sweeping over the schools, have we started to realize the sizable hidden cost that this current educational strategy has exacted.

Here it is necessary to be precise: the problem is not the pursuit of equality as such but the bias against excellence that has accompanied it. If anything, the effort to help children who start off life severely handicapped by their socioeconomic circumstances deserves more money and attention than it has received to date. However, that effort need not and must not obscure from view the quite separate problem of restoring academic quality to our schools. If real change is to occur in this regard, we must make clear to teachers and administrators that their mandate has been revised—that we want to move toward social equality *and* academic excellence.



Four Remedies

MOST OF THE REFORM PROPOSALS CURRENTLY on the table fail to speak to the other crisis in American education. The majority are designed to raise minimum standards or to cut the high school dropout rate. To the extent that higher-level academics gets mentioned, the discussion usually centers on such topics as critical-thinking and “process writing” skills and cooperative learning groups, as if a few minor adjustments in technique could make a significant difference. Almost no one addresses the fundamental, substantive issues that must be dealt with if we really want to restore excellence to our schools.

If that *is* our objective—if we are determined to recover the ground we have lost since 1970—then we should take the following concrete steps:

1) *Dramatically increase the quality and quantity of assigned reading for students at all grade levels.* By the senior year of high school, college-bound students should be reading the equivalent of at least twelve books a year *for class*, not counting textbooks, along with six to eight additional books under the rubrics of independent and summer reading. To build up to this amount, the reading load should be adjusted in each of the preceding grades so that students become gradually accustomed to reading more each year. (A good rule of thumb might be to have college-bound students read the same number of books each year as their grade number—eight books in the eighth grade, nine books in the ninth, and so on.) Since reading is a learned skill that can almost invariably be improved by practice, the sheer number of pages counts—the more the better. But there should also be an effort to make the assigned texts as complex and challenging as possible. In the end, nothing builds a true command of language faster than this kind of regimen.

I can already hear a chorus of educators declaring this proposal to be utterly unworkable. “Kids just don’t read anymore,” they will say. But the fact is that this sort of reading load, which was standard in the best American schools a quarter century ago, is still standard in some schools today. At McDonogh, an independent school just outside Baltimore that enrolls college-bound students from a wide range of ability levels, fifteen to twenty assigned books a year in English class is not unusual for eleventh and twelfth graders. College admissions officers I know rave about how well prepared McDonogh graduates are and how enthusiastic about learning. The secret, I’m convinced, is in the reading. I see no reason why other schools can’t follow McDonogh’s example.

2) *Bring back required survey courses as the staple of the high school humanities curriculum.* There are many different ways to do this. My preference would be to have one year of coordinated courses in history and English focused on the United States, another year focused on Europe, and a third year devoted to the non-European world. Issues of race and gender would naturally arise; it is hard, for instance, to cover American literature without including black and women writers, or to discuss our past without spending considerable time on slavery and segregation. But the main purpose of this curriculum would be to ensure that students enter college with a firm knowledge of how the world they will inherit has developed.

3) *Institute a flexible program of ability grouping at both the elementary and secondary school levels.* Few issues in education can raise tempers faster than ability grouping, and few are more badly misunderstood. The most common error is to confuse ability grouping with “tracking,” a practice in which students are sorted out at an early age according to their scores on intelligence tests and placed

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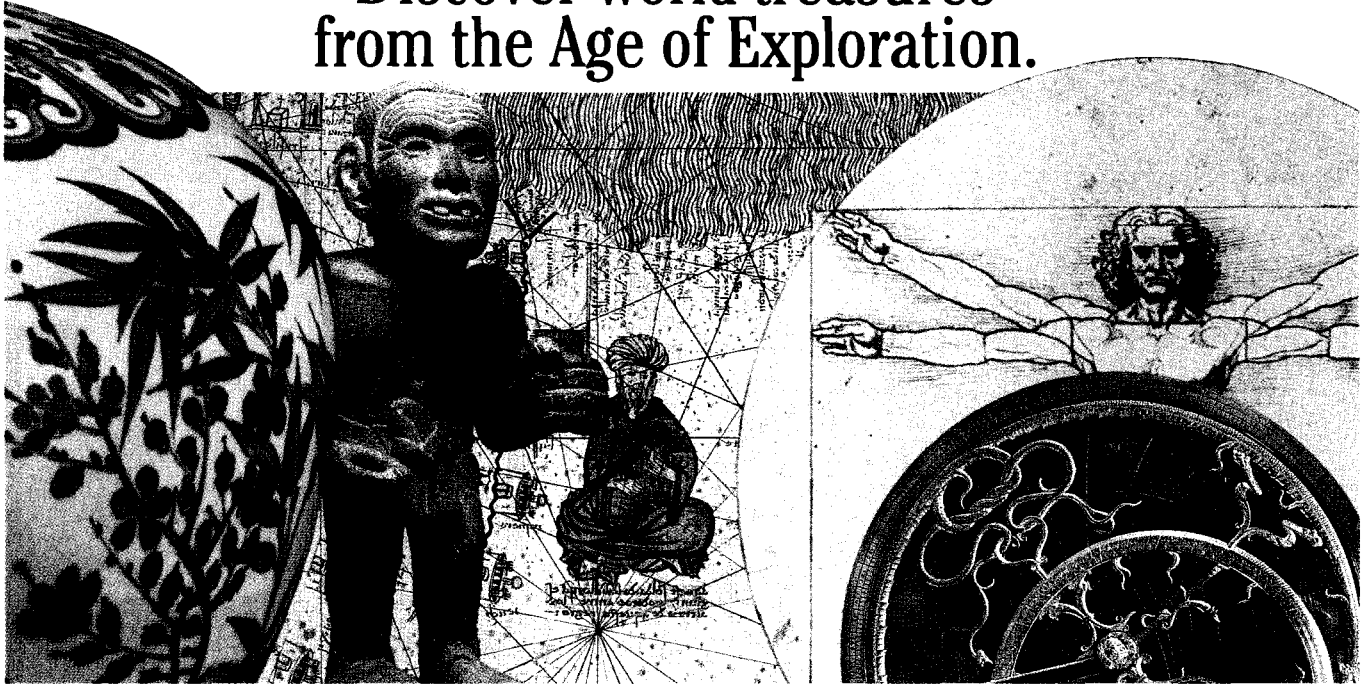
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Credits from left to right, details of: Blue and White Porcelain Jar with Plum and Bamboo Decorations, Ho-Am Art Museum, Kyunggi-Do, Korea; Xiuhtecuiltli as an Old Man, CNCA-INAH, Museo Nacional de Antropología, Mexico City; Atlas Catalan, Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris; Leonardo da Vinci's Vitruvian Man, Gallerie dell'Accademia, Venice; Astrolabe of Alphanus Severus, Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe, Hamburg.

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Students come to us having sat around for twelve years expressing attitudes toward things rather than analyzing. They are always ready to tell you how they feel, but they have never learned how to construct a rational argument."

in separate "tracks" for fast, medium, and slow learners, where they remain through high school. Reformers in the 1960s rightly objected to that kind of predestination, pointing out that minority and working-class children were often routinely put in the slow track and thus deprived of the chance to advance themselves through schooling. But unfortunately this assault on tracking soon broadened to include ability grouping, a somewhat murky term that I would contend should be defined as a system for dividing students up on the basis of their actual performance in individual subjects. Under ability grouping a student might start off in the fast group in math but the slow one in English, with the placements changing from year to year depending on his or her progress. The guiding principle is not to give privileged treatment to any one group but rather to provide instruction closely tailored to the learning needs of each child.

Does ability grouping work? The research can supply whatever verdict one favors. Until roughly the mid-1960s most of the studies tended to show that ability grouping was beneficial. Then came the cultural revolution of the late 1960s. For the next two decades researchers found that ability grouping was damaging to most students, especially those at the bottom. The pendulum now seems to be swinging back the other way, with a number of recent investigators suggesting that such grouping does not harm anyone and can be of great value to those of above-average ability, provided they get a special curriculum that is truly challenging rather than simply moving through the standard curriculum at a faster pace. Moreover, these newer studies suggest that ability grouping may actually enhance the achievement of slower learners if they, too, are given a curriculum and teaching style specially designed for them. A unique program at South Mecklenburg High School, in Charlotte, North Carolina, has even found that ability grouping can significantly help those in the middle ability range, though once again the crucial element is instruction tailored to their needs.

Since the research is contradictory, perhaps the best way to decide the issue is to apply common sense. It is obvious that with children of different ability levels in the same classroom, everything will tend toward a level just a notch above the lowest common denominator. Instead of being challenged to develop their talents to the fullest, the most capable students will be forced to work, in effect, at half speed. The math problems set before them will require little effort on their part to solve; the English texts will not stretch them in the least. As a result, these

students quickly discover that there is no reason for them ever to extend themselves, that they can coast through school with minimal effort.

Ability grouping continues to face formidable political opposition; last year, regrettably, the education task force of the National Governors' Association took its first major step by denouncing it (though its statement was so brief that one has difficulty telling whether it opposes ability grouping or tracking). Thus compromises may be in order. One possibility is the system of intensive courses adopted by the Waynflete School, in Portland, Maine. An intensive section in English entails a heavier than normal load of reading in more-advanced texts, more-sophisticated writing assignments, and faster-paced instruction. The key is that all students are free to try an intensive section; there is no teacher placement involved. Those doing so run little risk: since the curriculum includes the same core material covered in a regular section, students unable to handle the demands can drop back at any time during the school year.

This arrangement has several advantages. One is that the "regular" sections are truly regular, rather than "slow" or "remedial," so that those enrolled in them feel no stigma whatsoever. Better yet, students who voluntarily contract to be in a special section are especially motivated. Administrators at Waynflete report being pleasantly surprised at the number of kids with middle-range academic ability who perform well in intensive sections because they enjoy the challenge. And of course, this is a reform that can be implemented with relatively little disruption to other programs and at virtually no extra expense. It seems clear that more schools should be trying this system, yet to date, so far as I can tell, it remains unique to Waynflete.

4) *Attract more bright college graduates into the teaching profession.* It is astonishing, but all too true, that the average verbal SAT score of the young people drawn into teaching has hovered around 400 for more than a decade. "Half of the newly employed mathematics, science, and English teachers are not qualified to teach these subjects," bemoaned *A Nation at Risk*. Clearly, if we want top-notch instruction for college-bound students in the years ahead, we must find a new supply of capable teachers.

To the familiar prescriptions of offering much higher pay and better working conditions I would add that it's time to abolish certification requirements for teachers, at least above the elementary school level. When they first came into being, those requirements served the impor-

tant purpose of helping to raise standards, but today their only function is to discourage talented would-be teachers from entering the profession. Indeed, certification actually serves to *lower* standards: instead of acquiring a thoroughgoing knowledge of their subject, future teachers spend far too much of their time in college and graduate school taking Mickey Mouse courses on how to construct a lesson plan. Private schools do not require certification, yet they manage to attract a teaching corps of much higher quality—even at lower salaries than the public schools pay. “Our teachers never learned how to teach, which is why they teach so well,” quips Laurance Levy, the former head of McDonogh’s first-rate English department.

My impression is that many in the top quartile of the class at our best colleges would flood into teaching if they could do so on the basis of a liberal-arts bachelor’s degree—and if they could avoid the kind of stifling bureaucratic control that is all too often a teacher’s lot today. Some states, including New Jersey, have experimented with letting young teachers of this description loose in their classrooms, apparently with much success, though, alas, these new teachers are eventually required to obtain certification. And programs at various selective private colleges and universities permit would-be teachers to combine a liberal-arts degree and professional training. But for the most part the cumbersome, outdated apparatus of the teaching profession remains in place.

The solution? While it is probably not politically possible in most states to dismantle the existing system in the near future, why not set up a parallel system to provide an alternate career path for new teachers? Those liberal-arts college graduates choosing the new path would go straight to the classroom and be exempt from all formal professional training. They would, however, have more-experienced teachers in their schools serving as their mentors. Attracting these people into the profession would necessitate a much higher pay scale but also something more. When I recently asked a group of exceptionally capable students at my college if they would consider a teaching career along these lines, three quarters at first said yes, but soon reversed themselves. They had witnessed the demeaning conditions under which most teachers work, they explained, and wouldn’t want the job even if salaries were more appealing. The only way to lure them into the classroom, it became clear, would be to give them considerable freedom to shape their own curricula, allow them to choose instructional materials, and spare them the petty annoyances like the ubiquitous loudspeaker announcements that can suddenly disrupt a class. If the governors really want to do something useful to upgrade education, establishing this alternative career path is perhaps the most valuable project they could take up.



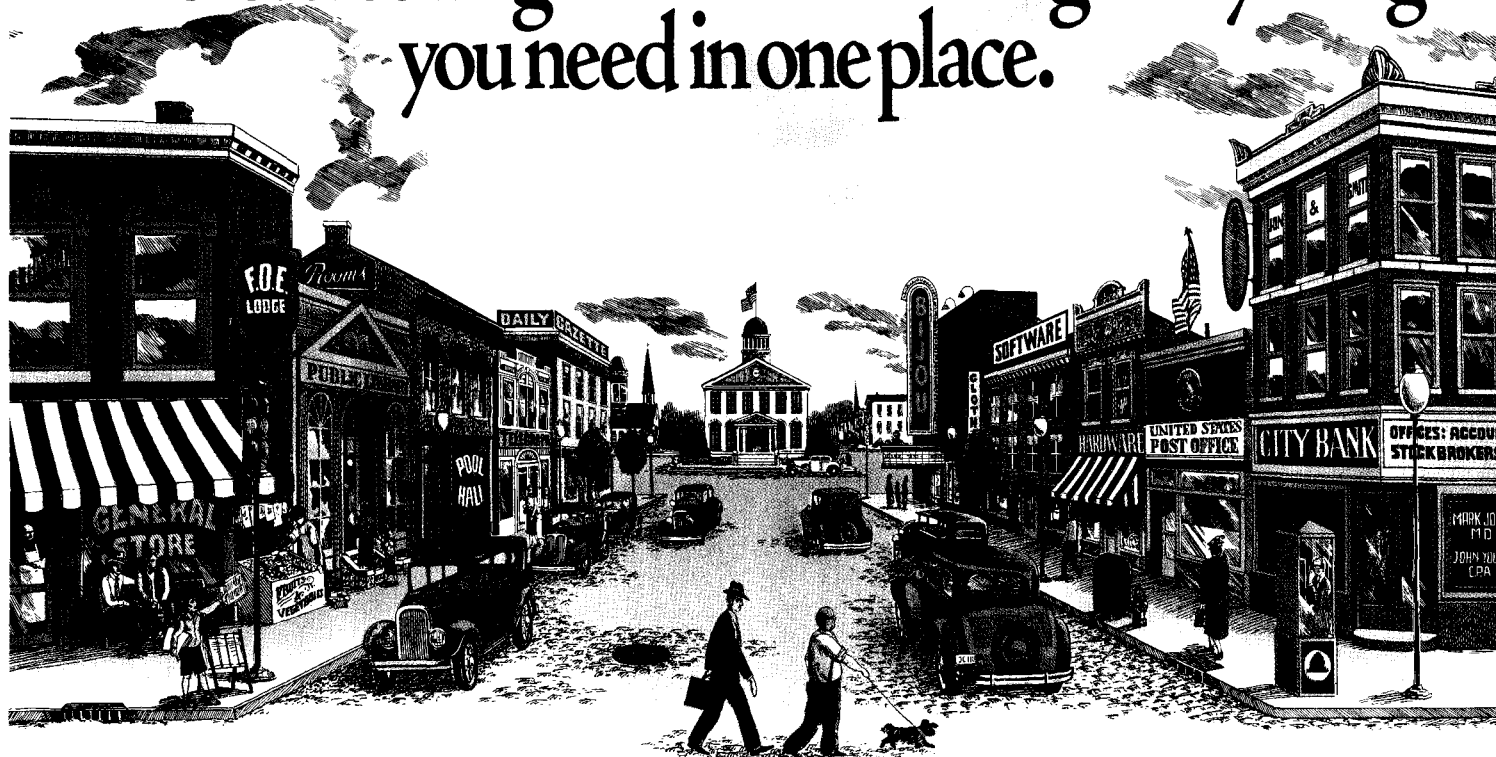
A Moral Issue

THE OTHER CRISIS IN AMERICAN EDUCATION HAS ominous implications for the well-being of our political system. According to a recent study by the Times Mirror Center for the People and the Press, titled “The Age of Indifference,” young Americans aged eighteen to twenty-nine are remarkably uninformed. They do read, the survey found, but primarily lightweight publications like *People* rather than serious newspapers or periodicals. Most striking, a majority of these young adults report that they often first become aware of political candidates from television commercials. This response cuts across all educational levels: college graduates and high school dropouts alike displayed a troubling ignorance of political facts and a reliance on sound-bites as their basic source of political knowledge. The “limited appetites and aptitudes” of this generation, the Times Mirror Center concluded, are already adversely affecting “the practice of politics and the nature of our democracy.”

One could advance a host of reasons—economic, social, and cultural—why this other crisis in education needs immediate attention. But in the end the most important is probably moral, having to do with the responsibility of each generation to look after the well-being of its children. Observing the performance of students who have been arriving at college campuses over the past decade, one can only conclude that the present generation of American parents has been failing in its obligation to provide its offspring with a high-quality education. It seems safe to predict that this failure will have specific consequences in a lower sense of professional fulfillment for these youngsters as they pursue their careers, and will hamper their ability to stay competitive with contemporaries in many European and Asian countries, where college-bound students typically do get the benefit of first-rate schools. Is it right or sensible to place our children at such a strong disadvantage before they even begin their adult lives?

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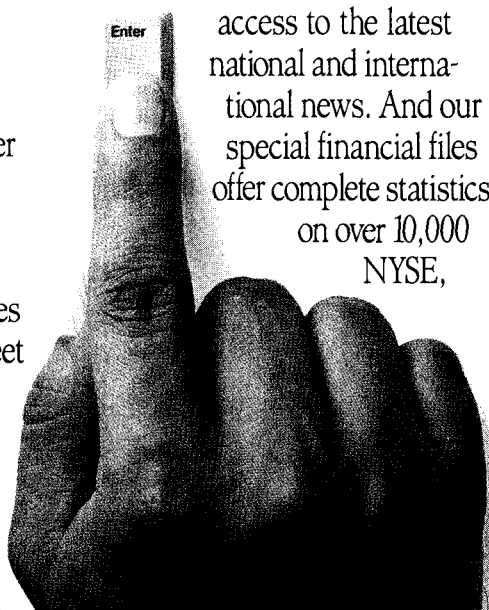


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A Short Story



Life After High School

by Joyce Carol Oates

"SUNNY? SUN-NY?"

On that last night of March, 1959, in soiled sheepskin parka and unbuckled overshoes, but bareheaded in the lightly falling snow, Zachary Graff, eighteen years old, six feet one and a half inches tall, weight 203 pounds, IQ 160, stood beneath Sunny Burhman's second-story bedroom window, calling her name softly, urgently, as if his very life depended on it. It was nearly midnight: Sunny had been in bed for a half hour, and woke from a thin dissolving sleep to hear her name rising mysteriously out of the dark, the voice low, gravelly, repetitive as the surf. "Sun-ny—?" She had not spoken with Zachary Graff since the previous week, when she'd told him, quietly, tears shining in her eyes, that she did not love him; she could not accept his engagement ring, still less marry him. This was the first time in the twelve weeks of Zachary's pursuit of her that he'd dared to come to the rear of the Burhmans' house, by day or night—the first time, as Sunny would say afterward, that he'd ever appealed to her in such a way.

They would ask, In what way?

Sunny would hesitate, and say, So—emotionally. In a way that scared me.

So you sent him away?

She did. She sent him away.

IT WAS MUCH TALKED OF AT SOUTH LEBANON HIGH School, how, in this winter of their senior year, Zachary Graff, who had never to anyone's recollection asked a girl out before, let alone pursued her so publicly and with such clumsy devotion, seemed to have fallen in love with Sunny Burhman.

Of all people—Sunny Burhman.

Odd, too, that Zachary should seem to have discovered Sunny only now, though the two had been classmates in the South Lebanon, New York, public schools since first grade.

Zachary, whose father was Homer Graff, the town's pre-eminent physician, had since ninth grade cultivated a clipped, mock-gallant manner when speaking with female classmates—his Clifton Webb style. He was unfailingly courteous, but unfailingly cool, measured, formal. He seemed impervious to the giddy rise and ebb of adolescent emotion, moving, clumsy but determined, like a grizzly bear on its hind legs, through the school corridors, rarely glancing to left or right: his gaze, its myopia corrected by lenses encased in chunky black-plastic frames, was firmly fixed on the horizon. Dr. Graff's son was not so much unpopular as feared, and thus disliked.

If Zachary's excellent academic record continued uninterrupted through final papers and final exams, and no one suspected that it would not, Zachary would be valedictorian

of the class of 1959. Barbara ("Sunny") Burhman, later to distinguish herself at Cornell, would graduate only ninth, in a class of eighty-two.

Zachary's attentiveness to Sunny had begun, with no warning, immediately after Christmas recess, when classes resumed in January. Suddenly, a half-dozen times a day, in Sunny's vicinity, looming large, eyeglasses glittering, there Zachary was. His Clifton Webb pose had dissolved; he was shy, stammering, yet forceful, even bold, waiting for the advantageous moment (for Sunny was always surrounded by friends) to push forward and say, "Hi, Sunny!" The greeting, utterly commonplace in content, sounded in Zachary's mouth like a Latin phrase tortuously translated.

Sunny, so named for her really quite astonishing smile, a dazzling white Sunny-smile that transformed a girl of conventional freckled, snub-nosed prettiness into a true beauty, might have been surprised initially but gave no sign, saying, "Hi, Zach!"

In those years the corridors of South Lebanon High School were lyric crossfires of *Hi!* and *H'lo!* and *Good to see ya!* uttered hundreds of times daily by the golden girls, the popular, confident, good-looking girls—club officers, prom queens, cheerleaders like Sunny Burhman

*Sunny didn't tell anyone
about the engagement ring. Of all
sins, she thought, betrayal
is surely the worst*



and her friends—tossed out indiscriminately, for that was the style.

Most of the students were in fact practicing Christians, of Lutheran, Presbyterian, and Methodist stock. Like Sunny Burhman, who was, or seemed, even at the time of this story, too good to be true. That's to say—*good*.

So, though Sunny soon wondered why on earth Zachary Graff was hanging around her, why, again, at her elbow, or lying in wait for her at the foot of a stairway, why, for the *n*th time that week, *him*, she was too *good* to indicate impatience or exasperation—too *good* to tell him, as her friends advised, to get lost.

He telephoned her too. Poor Zachary. Stammering

over the phone, his voice lowered as if he were in terror of being overheard, "Is S-Sunny there, Mrs. B-Burhman? May I speak with her, please?" And Mrs. Burhman, who knew Dr. Graff and his wife, of course, since everyone in South Lebanon, population 3,800, knew everyone else or knew of them, including frequently their family histories and facts about them of which their children were entirely unaware, hesitated, and said, "Yes, I'll put her on, but I hope you won't talk long—Sunny has homework tonight." Or, apologetically but firmly, "No, I'm afraid she isn't here. May I take a message?"

"N-no message," Zachary murmured, and hurriedly hung up.

Sunny, standing close by, thumbnail in the just perceptible gap between her front teeth, expression crinkled in dismay, whispered, "Oh, Mom. I feel so *bad*. I just feel so—*bad*."

Mrs. Burhman said briskly, "You don't have time for all of them, honey."

Still, Zachary was not discouraged, and in time their schoolmates began to observe Sunny engaged in conversations with him—the two of them sitting alone in a corner of the cafeteria, or walking together after a meeting of the Debate Club, of which Zachary was president and Sunny a member. They were both on the staff of the South Lebanon High *Beacon* and the 1959 South Lebanon High yearbook and the South Lebanon *Torch* (the literary magazine). They were both members of the National Honor Society and the Quill & Scroll Society. Though Zachary Graff, in his aloofness and impatience with most of his peers, would be remembered as antisocial—a "loner," in fact—his record of activities, printed beneath his photograph in the yearbook, suggested that he had time, or made time, for things that mattered to him.

He shunned sports, however. High school sports, at least. His life's game, he informed Sunny Burhman, unaware of the solemn pomposity with which he spoke, would be *golf*. His father had been instructing him informally since his twelfth birthday.

Zachary said, "I have no natural talent for it, and I find it profoundly boring, but golf will be my game." And he pushed his chunky black glasses roughly against the bridge of his nose, something he did countless times a day, as if they were in danger of sliding off.

Zachary Graff had such a physical presence that few of his contemporaries would have described him as unattractive, still less as homely. His head appeared oversized, even for his massive body; his eyes were deep-set, with a look of watchfulness and secrecy; his skin was tallow-colored and blemished in wavering patches like topographical maps. His big teeth glinted with filaments of silver, and his breath, oddly for one whose father was a doctor, was stale, musty—not that Sunny Burhman ever mentioned this fact to others.

Her friends began to ask her, a bit jealously, reproachfully, "What do you two talk about so much—you and *him*?" and Sunny replied, taking care not to hint with the slightest movement of her eyebrows, or rolling of her eyes, that, yes, she found the situation peculiar too, "Oh—Zachary and I talk about all kinds of things. *He* talks, mainly. He's brilliant. He's"—pausing, her forehead delicately crinkling in thought, her lovely brown eyes for a moment clouded—"well, *brilliant*."

In fact, at first Zachary spoke, in his intense, obsessive way, of impersonal subjects: the meaning of life, the future of Earth, whether science or art best satisfies the human hunger for self-expression. He said, laughing nervously, fixing Sunny with his bold stare, "Just to pose

certain questions is, I guess, to show your hope that they can be answered."

Early on, Zachary seemed to have understood that if he expressed doubt about "whether God exists," and so forth, Sunny Burhman would listen seriously, and would talk with him earnestly, with the air of a nurse giving a transfusion to a patient in danger of expiring from loss of blood. She was not a religious fanatic but she *was* a devout Christian: the Burhmans were members of the First Presbyterian Church of South Lebanon, and Sunny was president of her youth group and, among other good deeds, did YWCA volunteer work on Saturday afternoons; she had not the slightest doubt that Jesus Christ—that is to say, His spirit—dwelled in her heart, and that simply by speaking the truth of what she believed, she could convince others.

Though one day soon Sunny would examine her beliefs, and question the faith into which she'd been born, she had not yet done so. She was a virgin, and virginal in all, or most, of her thoughts.

Sometimes, behind her back, even by friends, Sunny was laughed at, gently—never ridiculed, for no one would ridicule Sunny.

When popular Chuck Crueller, a quarterback for the South Lebanon varsity football team, was injured during a game and carried off by ambulance to undergo emergency surgery, Sunny mobilized the other cheerleaders, tears fierce in her eyes: "We can do it for Chuck—we can *pray*." And so the eight girls in their short-skirted crimson jumpers and starched white cotton blouses had gripped one another's hands tightly, and weeping, on the verge of hysteria, had prayed, prayed, *prayed*—hidden away in the depths of the girls' locker room for hours. Sunny had led the prayers, and Chuck Crueller had recovered.

So you wouldn't ridicule Sunny Burhman. Somehow it wouldn't be appropriate.

As her classmate Tobias Shanks wrote of her, in his function as literary editor of the 1959 South Lebanon yearbook: "*Sunny*" *Burhman!*—*an all-American girl too good to be true who is nonetheless TRUE!*

If Tobias Shanks's praise obscured a slyly mocking tone, a hint that such goodness was predictable and superficial, perhaps of no genuine merit, the caption, mere print, beneath Sunny's dazzlingly beautiful photograph conveyed nothing but admiration and affection.

Surprisingly, for all his pose of skepticism and superiority, Zachary Graff, too, was a Christian. He'd been baptized Lutheran, and never failed to attend Sunday services with his parents at the First Lutheran Church. Amid the congregation of somber, somnambulant worshippers, Zachary Graff's frowning young face, the set of his beefy shoulders, drew the minister's uneasy eye; some parishioners murmured of Dr. Graff's precocious son, in retrospect, that he'd been perhaps too *serious*.

Before falling in love with Sunny Burhman, and dis-

My Rock Of Gibraltar.



He looked like a young George Burns. That's what all the girls used to say. He actually used to call me Gracie. When he was shipped overseas he wrote twice a week. He sent letters from Germany and Paris, and once he even sent one from the front lines. I think he's written more meaningful words on paper with that Cross pen than he's ever said to me in person. He still uses the same pen, and always jokes that it will last longer than he will. But I bought him a new Cross ball-point pen, I want to save the old one for myself. It reminds me of the time when I received a bunch of letters addressed to a girl he called Gracie.

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SCOTS WHISKY

UNCOMMONLY SMOOTH

cussing his religious doubts with her, Zachary had often discussed them with Tobias Shanks, who'd been his friend, you might say his only friend, since seventh grade. (But only sporadically since seventh grade, because the boys, each highly intelligent and inclined to impatience and sarcasm, got on each other's nerves.) Once, Zachary confided in Tobias that he prayed every morning of his life. Immediately upon waking he scrambled out of bed, knelt, hid his face in his hands, and prayed—for his sinful soul, for his sinful thoughts, deeds, desires. He lacerated his soul the way he'd been taught by his mother to tug a fine-toothed steel comb through his coarse, oily hair: never less than once a day.

Tobias Shanks, a self-proclaimed agnostic since the age of fourteen, laughed and asked derisively, "Yes, but what do you pray *for*, exactly?" Zachary had thought a bit and said, not ironically, but altogether seriously, "To get through the day. Doesn't everyone?"

ZACHARY'S PARENTS urged him to go to Muhlenberg College, which was church-affiliated; Zachary hoped to go elsewhere. He said humbly to Sunny Burhman, "If you go to Cornell, Sunny, I—maybe I'll go there too?"

Sunny hesitated and then smiled. "Oh. That would be nice."

"You wouldn't mind, Sunny?"

"Why would I *mind*, Zachary?" Sunny laughed, to hide her impatience. They were headed for Zachary's car, parked just up the hill from the YM-YWCA building. It was a gusty Saturday afternoon in early March. Leaving the YWCA, Sunny had seen Zachary Graff standing at the curb as if accidentally, his hands in the pockets of his sheepskin parka, his head lowered but his eyes nervously alert.

She couldn't avoid him, and so had to allow him to drive her home. She was beginning to feel panic, however, like darting tongues of flame, at the prospect of Zachary Graff always *there*.

Tell the creep to get lost, her friends counseled. Even her nice friends were unsentimental about Zachary Graff.

Until sixth grade Sunny had been plain little Barbara Burhman. Then, one day, her teacher had said to all the class, in one of those moments of inspiration that can alter, by whim, the course of an entire life, "Tell you what, boys and girls: let's call Barbara 'Sunny' from now on—that's what she *is*."

Ever afterward in South Lebanon she was "Sunny" Burhman. Plain little Barbara had been left behind, seemingly forever.

So of course Sunny could not tell Zachary Graff to get lost. Such words were not part of her vocabulary.

Zachary owned a plum-colored 1956 Plymouth, which other boys envied—why should Zachary, of all people, have his own car, when so few of them, who loved cars, did? But Zachary was oblivious of their resentment, as, in a way, he seemed oblivious of his own good fortune. He drove the car as if it were an adult duty, with middle-aged fussiness and worry. Yet driving Sunny home he talked—chattered—continuously. He spoke of college and of religious "obligations" and of his parents' expectations, of medical school, the future, life—"beyond South Lebanon."

He asked again, in that gravely, irksomely humble voice, if Sunny would mind if he went to Cornell. And Sunny said, trying to sound reasonable, "Zachary, it's a *free world*."

Zachary said, "Oh, no, it isn't, Sunny. For some of us, it isn't."

This enigmatic remark Sunny was determined not to pursue.

Braking to a careful stop in front of the Burhmans' house, Zachary said, with an almost

boyish enthusiasm, "So—Cornell? In the fall? We'll both go to Cornell?"

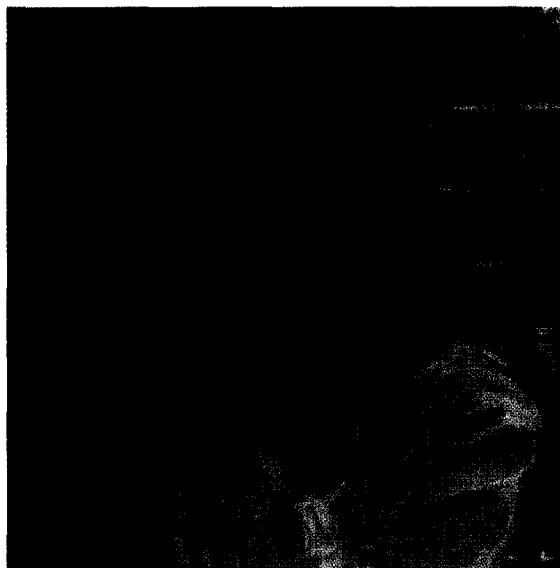
Sunny was out of the car before Zachary could put on the emergency brake and come around, ceremoniously, to open her door. Gaily, recklessly, infinitely relieved to be out of his company, she called back over her shoulder, "Why not?"

SUNNY'S SECRET VANITY MUST HAVE BEEN WHAT linked them. For several times, gravely, Zachary had said to her, "When I'm with you, Sunny, it's possible for me to believe."

He meant, she thought, believe in God. In Jesus. In the life hereafter.

THE NEXT TIME ZACHARY MANEUVERED SUNNY into his car, under the pretext of driving her home, he presented the startled girl with an engagement ring.

He'd bought the ring at Stern's Jewelers, South Lebanon's single good jewelry store, with money withdrawn from his savings account. This was his "college fund," or





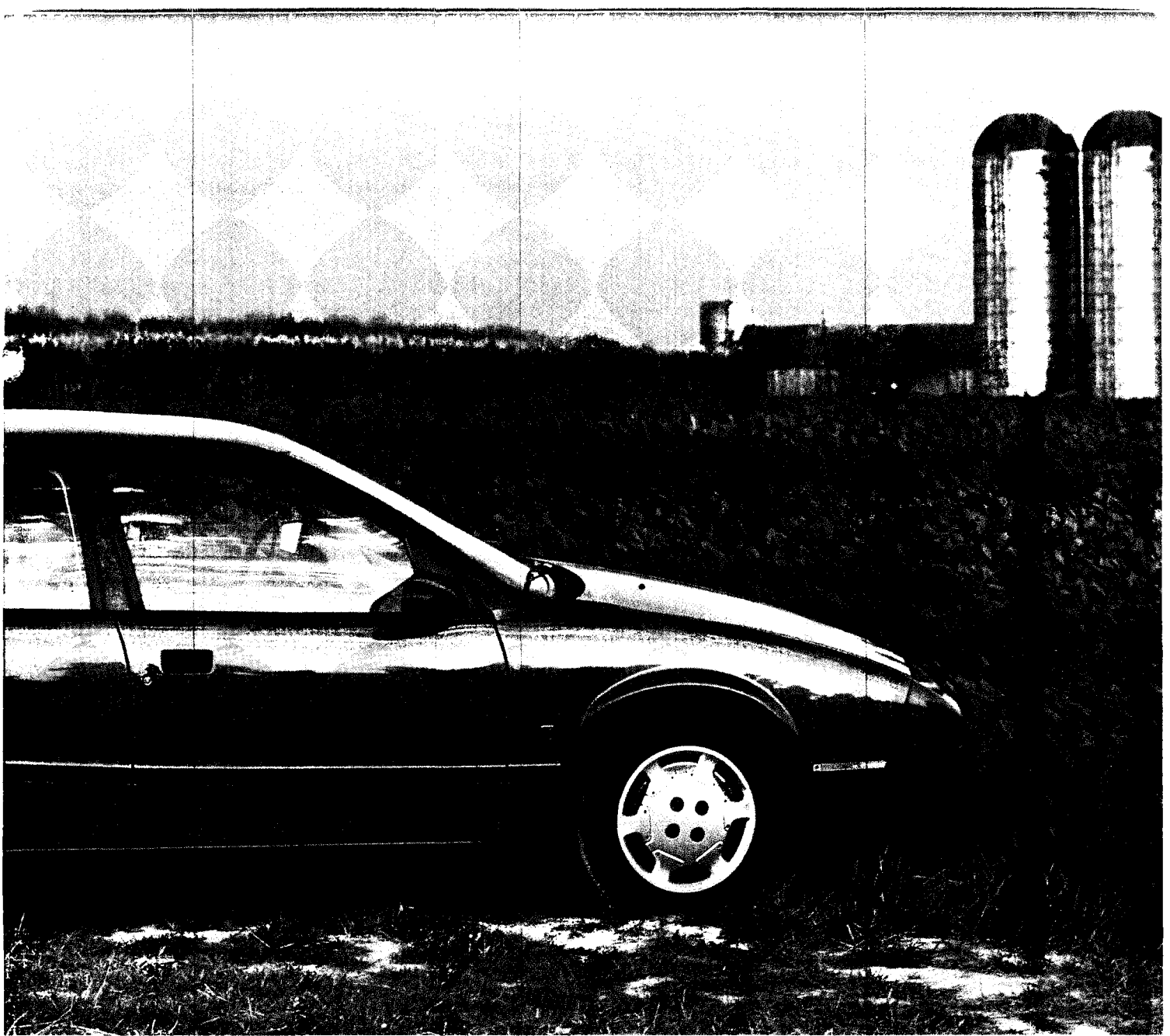
JOHN HOLTKAMP was spending more on gas than on film, which posed a problem for him.

John's a photographer. And he used to drive a truck. That big box he's leaning on is his bread and butter, and he takes it (and more) wherever the work happens to be. Which, on the average, means 750 miles from Monday morning to Friday night.

Hoping to pay less for those miles, John shopped the small imports. But they just wouldn't do. Then he heard about us. So he came by, with all his stuff, and looked at a Saturn sedan.

©1991 Saturn Corporation. EPA-estimated MPG for the SLI automatic is 26 city/35 highway. John Holtkamp is pictured with a 1992 Saturn SLI.

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(Our 60/40 split fold-down rear seatbacks, while a real mouthful to say, make it easy when you have more than a trunkful to haul.)

On the weekends, John hauls animal feed. Because the Holtkamps have a llama, eight miniature donkeys, and an emu.

Since we didn't know what an emu was either, we asked, before meeting, if he wouldn't mind holding his emu while we took a picture of him and his Saturn. "Well," John said, "it's okay with me, but emus don't really like that sort of thing."



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had been—out of the \$2,245 saved, only \$1,090 remained. How astonished, upset, furious, his parents would be when they learned, Zachary hadn't allowed himself to contemplate.

The Graffs knew nothing about Sunny Burhman. So far as they knew, their son's frequent absences from home were nothing out of the ordinary. He'd always spent time at the public library, where his preferred reading was reference books. Sometimes he'd begin with Volume One of a set and make his way through successive volumes like a horse grazing a field, rarely glancing up, uninterested in his surroundings.

"Please—will you accept it?"

Sunny was staring incredulously at the diamond ring, which was presented to her not in Zachary's big clumsy fingers, with the dirt-edged nails, but in a plush-lined little box, as if it might be more attractive that way, more like a gift. The ring was 24-carat gold and the diamond

MISSION BOULEVARD

The head shops with their billowing cloth canopies, red lights, and bead curtains. The girls in bikinis, trying on thin brass bracelets, bells tied with leather straps around their ankles. And the boys in their baggies and jams, red and blue Saint Christopher medals around their necks. Everyone shuffling, barefoot or in water-buffalo sandals, hair long, shaggy with salt, reddish or blond. And there was that room in the back with black lights where you picked out the posters of Pig Pen and Castro, and the lady with too many bracelets rolled them tightly into plastic sleeves.

And now years later you think what hope is there for a secret life? or for the awkwardness of taking out from your madras shorts the vinyl football-shaped coin purse in which you'd carefully folded your savings for just this purchase? What hope is there for falling in love again with that woman who took the money and handed back the change smelling of incense and leather, while you stared through the glass sales case filled with pipes, hookahs, and roach clips and the colorful packs of cigarette papers displayed in a fan like the tail of an exotic bird?

—Michael Collier

was small but distinctive, and coldly glittering. The ring was beautiful, but Sunny did not see it that way.

She whispered, "Oh. Zachary. Oh, *no*—there must be some misunderstanding."

Zachary seemed prepared for her reaction, because he said, quickly, "Will you just try it on?—see if it fits?"

Sunny shook her head. No, she couldn't.

"They'll take it back to adjust it, if it's too big," Zachary said. "They promised."

"Zachary, no," Sunny said gently. "I'm so sorry." Tears flooded her eyes and spilled over onto her cheeks.

Zachary was saying eagerly, his lips flecked with spittle, "I realize you don't l-love me, Sunny, at least not yet, but—you could wear the ring, couldn't you? Just—wear it?" He continued to hold the little box out to her, his hand visibly shaking. "On your right hand, if you don't want to wear it on your left? Please?"

"Zachary, no. That's impossible."

"Just, you know, as a, a gift? Oh, Sunny . . ."

They were sitting in the plum-colored Plymouth, parked in an awkwardly public place, on Upchurch Avenue, three blocks from Sunny's house. It was 4:25 P.M., March 26, a Thursday: Zachary had lingered after school in order to drive Sunny home after choir practice. Sunny would afterward recall, with an odd haltingness, as if her memory of the episode were blurred with tears, that Zachary, as usual, had done most of the talking. He had not argued with her, nor exactly begged, but had spoken almost formally, as if setting out the basic points of his debating strategy: if Sunny did not love him, he could love enough for both; and if Sunny did not want to be "officially" engaged, she could wear his ring anyway, couldn't she?

It would mean so much to him, Zachary said.

Life or death, Zachary said.

Sunny closed the lid of the little box and pushed it from her, gently. She was crying, and her smooth page-boy was now disheveled. "Oh, Zachary, I'm *sorry*. I *can't*."

SUNNY KNELT BY HER BED, HID HER FACE IN HER hands, prayed.

Please help Zachary not to be in love with me. Please help me not to be cruel. Have mercy on us both, O God.

O God, help him to realize he doesn't love me, doesn't know *me*.

Days passed, and Zachary did not call.

Sunny Burhman was not a girl of secrets. She was not a girl of stealth. Still, though she had confided in her mother all her life, she did not tell her mother about Zachary's desperate proposal; perhaps, flattered, she did not see it as desperate. She reasoned that if she told either of her parents, they would telephone Zachary's parents immediately. I can't betray him, she thought.

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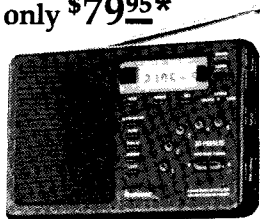


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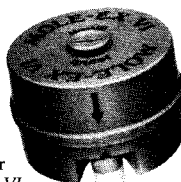
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Nor did she tell her closest girl friends, or the boy she was seeing most frequently at the time, knowing that the account would turn comical in the telling, that she and her listeners would collapse into laughter, and this, too, would be a betrayal of Zachary.

She happened to see Tobias Shanks one day looking oddly at her. Sunny knew that he was, or had been, a friend of Zachary Graff's; she wondered if Zachary confided in him, yet she made no effort to speak with him. He didn't like her, she sensed.

No, Sunny didn't tell anyone about Zachary and the engagement ring. Of all sins, she thought, betrayal is surely the worst.

"SUNNY? SUN-NY?" She did not believe she had been sleeping, but the low, persistent, gravelly sound of Zachary's voice penetrated her consciousness like a dream voice, felt, not heard.

She got out of bed and crouched at her window without turning on the light. She saw, to her horror, Zachary down below, standing in the shrubbery, his large head uplifted, face round like the moon, and shadowed like the moon's face. Blossom-like clumps of snow had fallen on the boy's broad shoulders, in his matted hair. Sighting her, he began to wave excitedly, like an impatient child.

"Oh, Zachary. My God."

In haste, fumbling, she put on a bulky-knit ski sweater over her flannel nightgown, kicked on bedroom slippers, hurried downstairs. The house was already dark; the Burhmans were in the habit of going to bed early. Sunny's hope was that she could send Zachary away without her parents' knowing he was there. Even in her distress she was not thinking of the trouble Zachary might make for her: she was thinking of the trouble he might make for himself.

Yet as soon as she saw him close up, she realized that something was gravely wrong. Here was Zachary Graff—yet not Zachary.

He told her he had to talk with her, and he had to talk with her now. His car was parked in the alley, he said.

He made a gesture as if to take her hand, but Sunny drew back. He loomed over her, his breath steaming. She could not see his eyes.

She said no, she couldn't go with him. She said he must go home, at once, before her parents woke up.

He said he couldn't leave without her, he had to talk with her. The raw urgency, the forcefulness in him, Sunny had never seen before, and she was frightened.

She said no. He said yes.

He reached again for her hand, this time taking hold of her wrist.

His fingers were strong.

"I told you, I can love enough for both!"

Sunny stared up at him, for an instant mute, paralyzed,

seeing not Zachary Graff's eyes but the lenses of his glasses, which appeared, in the semi-dark, opaque. Large snowflakes were falling languidly through the still night air. Sunny saw Zachary Graff's face, which was pale and clenched as a muscle, and she heard his voice, which was the voice of a stranger, and she felt him tug at her so roughly that her arm was strained in its very socket, and she cried, "No! No! Go away! No!" The spell was broken; the boy gaped at her another moment and then released her, turned, and ran.

No more than two or three minutes had passed, yet afterward Sunny would recall the encounter as if it had lasted a very long time, like a scene in a protracted and repetitive nightmare.

That was the last time Sunny Burhman saw Zachary Graff alive.

NEXT MORNING ALL OF SOUTH LEBANON talked about the death of Dr. Graff's son, Zachary: he'd committed suicide by parking his car in a garage behind an unoccupied house on Upchurch Avenue, and letting the motor run until the gas tank was empty. Death was diagnosed as the result of carbon-monoxide poisoning, the time estimated at approximately 4:30 A.M., April 1, 1959.

Was the date deliberate? Zachary had left only a single note behind, printed in firm block letters and taped to the outside of the car windshield:

April Fool's Day 1959

To Whom It May (Or May Not) Concern:

I, Zachary A. Graff, being of sound mind & body, do hereby declare that I have taken my own life of my own free will & I hereby declare all others guiltless as they are ignorant of the death of the aforementioned & the life.

ZACHARY A. GRAFF

Police officers, called to the scene at 7:45 A.M., reported finding Zachary lifeless, stripped to his underwear, in the rear seat of the car. The sheepskin parka was oddly draped over the steering wheel, and the interior of the car was littered with numerous items: a Bible, several high school textbooks, a pizza carton and some uneaten crusts of pizza, several empty Pepsi bottles, an empty bag of M&M candies, a pair of unlaced gym shoes (size 11), a ten-foot length of clothesline (in the glove compartment), and a diamond ring in its plush-lined box from Stern's Jewelers (in a pocket of the parka).

Sunny Burhman heard the news of Zachary's suicide before leaving for school that morning, when a friend telephoned. Within earshot of both her astonished parents, Sunny burst into tears and sobbed, "Oh, my God—it's my fault."

80 Proof Brandy's E&J Brandy's, Modesto, CA

Change to something more comfortable.
E&J and soda.

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The consensus in South Lebanon, following the police investigation and much public speculation, proved to be not that it was Sunny Burhman's fault, exactly, not that the girl was to blame, exactly, but that, yes, poor Zachary Graff, the doctor's son, had killed himself in despondency over her, over her refusal of his engagement ring, her rejection of his love.

THAT WAS THE FINAL SEASON OF HER LIFE AS "Sunny" Burhman.

She was out of school for a full week following Zachary's death, and when she returned, conspicuously paler, more subdued, in all ways less sunny, she did not speak of the tragedy, even with her closest friends; nor did anyone else bring up the subject. She withdrew her name from balloting for senior-prom queen, she withdrew from her part in the senior play, she dropped out of the school choir, she did not participate in the annual statewide debating competition—in which, in previous years, Zachary Graff had excelled. Following her last class of the day she went home immediately, and rarely saw her friends on weekends. Was she in mourning? Was she ashamed? Like the bearer of a deadly virus, herself unaffected, Sunny knew how, on all sides, her classmates and her teachers were regarding her: she was the girl for whose love a boy had thrown away his life; she was an unwitting agent of death.

Her family, of course, told her that she shouldn't blame herself, that Zachary Graff had been mentally unbalanced.

Even the Graffs did not blame her—or said they didn't.

Sunny said, "Yes. But it's my fault he's dead."

The Presbyterian minister, who counseled Sunny and prayed with her, assured her that Jesus surely understood, that she had not sinned—that Zachary Graff had been mentally unbalanced. And Sunny replied matter-of-factly, sadly, as if stating a self-evident truth, "Yes. But it's my fault he's dead."

Her older sister, Helen, later that summer, meaning only well, said exasperatedly, "Sunny, when are you going to cheer up?" Sunny turned on her with uncharacteristic fury and said, "Don't call me that idiotic name ever again! I want it *gone!*"

When, in the fall, she enrolled at Cornell University, she was "Barbara Burhman."

She remained "Barbara" for the rest of her life.

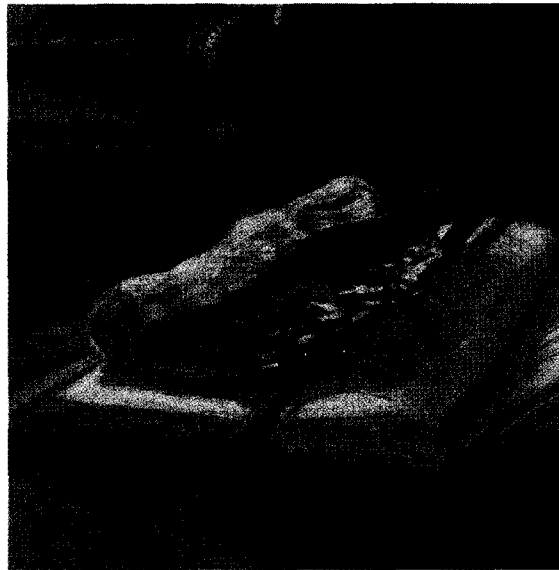
BARBARA BURHMAN EXCELLED AS AN UNDERgraduate, concentrating on academic work almost exclusively; she went on to graduate school at Harvard, in American studies; she taught at several prestigious universities, rising rapidly through the administrative ranks before accepting a position, both highly paid and politically visible, with a well-known research foundation based in Manhattan. She was the author of numerous books and articles; she was married and the mother of three children; she lectured widely; she was frequently interviewed in the popular press; she lent her name to good causes. She did not think of herself as extraordinary—in the world she now inhabited, she was surrounded by similarly active, energetic, professionally engaged men and women—except in recalling, as she sometimes did, with a mild pang of nostalgia, her old, lost self, sweet "Sunny" Burhman, of South Lebanon, New York.

She hadn't been queen of the senior prom. She hadn't even continued to be a Christian.

The irony had not escaped Barbara Burhman that in casting away his young life so recklessly, Zachary Graff had freed her for hers.

With the passage of time grief had lessened. Perhaps it had disappeared. After twenty, and then twenty-five, and now thirty-one years, it was difficult for Barbara, known in her adult life as an exemplar of practical sense, to feel a kinship with the adolescent girl she'd been, or with that claustrophobic high school world of the late 1950s. She'd never returned for a single high school reunion. If she thought of Zachary Graff—about whom, incidentally, she'd never told her husband of twenty-eight years—it was with the regret with which we think of remote acquaintances, lost to us by accidents of fate. Forever Zachary Graff, the most brilliant member of the class of 1959 of South Lebanon High, would remain a high school boy, trapped in his eighteenth year.

Of his classmates, the only other person to have acquired what might be called a national reputation was Tobias Shanks, now known as T. R. Shanks, a playwright and director of experimental drama. Barbara had followed Tobias's career with interest, and had sent him a telegram congratulating him on his most recent play, which went on to win a number of awards, dealing, as it did, with the vicissitudes of gay life in the 1980s. In the winter of 1990 Barbara and Tobias began to encounter each other socially; Tobias was the playwright-in-resi-



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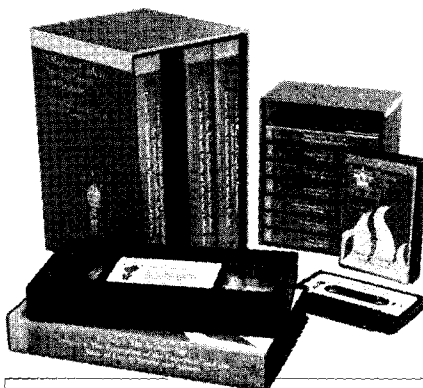
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dence at Bard College, close by Hazelton-on-Hudson, where Barbara lived. At first they were strangely shy of each other, and guarded, as if, even in this neutral setting, their South Lebanon ghost selves exerted a powerful influence. The golden girl and the loner. The splendidly normal, the defiantly "odd." One night Tobias Shanks, shaking Barbara's hand, had smiled wryly and said, "It *is* Sunny, isn't it?" And Barbara, laughing nervously, hoping no one had overheard, said, "No, in fact it isn't. It's Barbara."

They looked at each other, mildly dazed. For one saw a small-boned but solidly built man of youthful middle age, sweet-faced, yet with ironic, pouched eyes, thinning gray hair, and a close-trimmed gray beard; the other saw a woman of youthful middle age, striking in appearance, impeccably groomed, with fading hair of no distinctive color, and faint, white, puckering lines at the edges of her eyes. Their ghost selves *were* there—not aged, or not aged merely, but transformed, as the genes of one generation are transformed by the next.

Tobias stared at Barbara for a long moment, as if unable to speak. Finally he said, "I have something to tell you, Barbara. When can we meet?"

TOBIAS SHANKS HANDED THE MUCH-FOLDED letter across the table to Barbara, and watched as she opened it and read it with an expression of increasing astonishment and wonder.

"He wrote this? Zachary? To you?"

"He did."

"And you—? Did you—?"

Tobias shook his head.

His expression was carefully neutral, but his eyes swam suddenly with tears.

"We'd been friends, very close friends, for years. Each other's only friend, most of the time. The way kids that age can be, in certain restricted environments—kids who aren't what's called 'average' or 'normal.' We talked a good deal about religion—Zachary was afraid of hell. We both liked science fiction. We both had very strict parents. I suppose I might have been attracted to Zachary at times—I knew I was attracted to other guys—but of course I never acted on it; I wouldn't have dared. Almost no one dared, in those days." He laughed, with a mild shudder. He passed a hand over his eyes. "I couldn't have *loved* Zachary Graff, as he claimed he loved me, because—I couldn't. But I could have allowed him to know that he wasn't sick, crazy, 'perverted,' as he called him-

self in that letter." He paused. For a long, painful moment Barbara thought he wasn't going to continue. Then he said, with that same mirthless, shuddering laugh, "I could have made him feel less lonely. But I didn't. I failed him. My only friend."

Barbara had taken out a tissue and was dabbing at her eyes.

She felt as if she'd been dealt a blow so hard she could not gauge how she'd been hurt—or if she'd been hurt at all.

She said, "Then he never really loved a 'Sunny'—she was an illusion."

Tobias said thoughtfully, "I don't know. I suppose so. I got a sense, at least as I saw it at the time, that, yes, he'd chosen you, decided on you."

"As a symbol."

"Not just as a symbol. We all adored you—we were all a little in love with you." Tobias laughed, embarrassed. "Even me."

"I wish you had come to me and told me, back then. After—it happened."

"I was too frightened. I was terrified of being exposed and, maybe, doing to myself what he'd done to himself. Suicide is so very attractive to adolescents." Tobias paused, and reached over to touch Barbara's hand. His fingertips were cold. "I'm not proud of myself, Barbara, and I've tried to deal with it in my writing, but—that's how I was, back then." Again he paused. He pressed a little harder against Barbara's hand. "Another thing—after Zachary went to you that night, he came to me."

"To you?"

"To me."

"And—?"

"And I refused to go with him too. I was furious with him for coming to the house like that, risking my parents' discovering us. I guess I got a little hysterical. And he fled."

"He fled."

"Then, afterward, I just couldn't bring myself to come forward. Why I saved that letter, I don't know—I'd thrown away some others that were less incriminating. I suppose I figured—no one knew about me, everyone knew about you. 'Sunny' Burhman."

They ordered two more drinks—they'd forgotten their surroundings—and they talked.

After an hour or so Barbara leaned across the table, as at one of her professional meetings, and asked, in a tone of intellectual curiosity, "What do you think Zachary planned to do with the clothesline?" □

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THREE KINDS of winter destinations break down into a myriad of peak experiences, detailed herein. For example, volcanologist Jon Erickson, who spoke with us from Hawaii, shares his ringside view of the world's most active volcano. Ski filmmaker Greg Stump and "extreme" skier Glen Plake describe their world-favorite snowy places—"just amazing!" they both say. Actress and author Madhur Jaffrey's India encompasses both feudal desert and lush tropical beaches. Writer J. M. Coetzee recommends a bicycle tour through his native South Africa.

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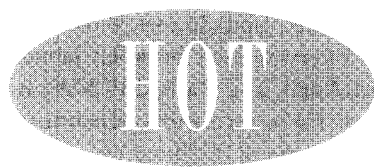
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Greeting a grouper near Providenciales Island, Turks and Caicos Islands



TURKS AND CAICOS ISLANDS

JOSIAH MARVEL, who in 1989 was appointed Her Majesty's Quincentenary Historian for the Turks and Caicos Islands, is a leading proponent of the theory that Grand Turk, not the Bahamas, was the site of Columbus's first landfall.

"The islands appear to be developing a sort of cachet as a place where venturesome people like to go. If you come down here, you can go up into the cays and walk on a beach that hasn't seen footprints for days. It's absolutely superb.

"One of the nicest things to do here is snorkeling or diving; that introduces you to a world of rare animation and beauty. Right in front of the north shore there is a profusion of coral heads, behind the reef, which just abound in a blaze of color and movement. (Columbus even speaks of seeing the colored fish being *muy descanso*, very reposing.) Then you can put on tanks and go over the walls. These islands are on two banks which have almost vertical walls. You can go down a couple of hundred feet; because of the limited rainfall

there's very little runoff from the land, which provides a most unusual clarity to the water. You may get lucky and see something like a giant manta ray with a 12-foot wingspan and a mouth about as big as a large television set. If you're good you can clamp your hands on its shoulders and get a ride."

ARIZONA

WILLIAM L. RATHJE is an archaeologist and anthropologist, and the director of the Garbage Project, at the University of Arizona. He is a coauthor of *Rubbish! The Archaeology of Garbage*, to be published in the spring by HarperCollins. Rathje has lived in Tucson for more than 20 years.

"Number one on anybody's list would have to be to visit the Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum—world-class in every way. It's an amazing place to see all the desert flora and fauna. It really is a gem in the desert—of the

desert, for the desert, in the middle of the desert.

"You also have to see the Mission San Xavier del Bac. There is a spectacular Easter fiesta at the local Native American village where they do the famous Pasqua Yaqui deer dance, duplicated in all its wonderment in Mexico City at the Ballet Folklórico. The mission is on a Tohono O'odham reservation, just a few minutes from the city.

"Tucson is in a valley ringed by five beautiful mountain ranges. Hiking is really quite a joy. Sabino Canyon is a breathtaking canyon going up into the Catalina Mountains. It's been the location for a variety of films. In the winter, it's just ideal hiking weather. You want to get there after it's rained, when the river is running through the canyon. You will not need any kind of winter apparel, maybe a long-sleeved shirt, *maybe* a light sweater.

"If people like ghost towns, Arizona is a great place to drive into the country and explore. And obviously, if you're into garbage like I am, you can find dumps and bins in these towns. There are thousands of little ceramic cups. But, believe it or not, taking *anything* from one of those ghost towns would, by an archaeologist's definition, be looting. So whatever I see there, I leave there.

"There are just tons of great restaurants in Tucson, especially Mexican food. Every restaurant along the border has its own special dishes and flavors. I would recommend a combination chimichanga, enchilada-style. That is an Arizona-Mex food. You're never going to find a better chimichanga. Everybody shares cuisines, but you can't get the Real

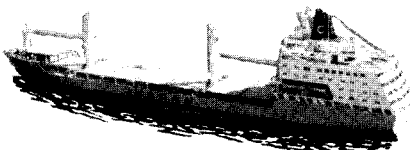
HOW HOT IS HOT? **TURKS AND CAICOS ISLANDS:** Minimum and maximum average daily temperature in winter, 70–90°F. **TUCSON:** 38–64°F. **HAWAII:** 65–80°F. **BARBADOS:** 75–85°F. ■ The hottest recorded temperature in the U.S. is 134°F, at Death Valley, California. ■ Lava appears in colors from dark red to yellow; yellow lava is the hottest, reaching above 2100°F. ■ Astronaut John Glenn was debriefed on Grand Turk after his 1962 mission. ■ Arizona has more Indian reservations than any other state. ■ Temperatures worldwide in 1990 were the highest ever recorded.

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HAWAII

JON ERICKSON, a supervisory park ranger at the Hawaii Volcanoes National Park, runs the park's Jaggar Museum, which opened in 1987 and is devoted to the sciences of volcanology and seismology.

"The park makes up about one tenth of the big island of Hawaii. Almost two million people visit each year. There is an 11-mile crater-rim



Pu'u O'o Vent's fountain and lava flow

drive that encircles the summit of Kilauea, right now the most active volcano in the world. Branching off this is the Chain of Craters Road. The visitor can drive down a distance of 24 miles and then walk a mile and a quarter over relatively fresh lava and watch molten rock pouring into the Pacific. We look at this current eruptive phase on Kilauea as the longest flank eruption and most voluminous flow in recorded history. The flow field has been up to seven miles wide. We have the philosophy that this is a lifetime-experience opportunity, and if you miss it you're going to regret it. By going out, people are seeing

probably the greatest event of their lifetime, and that is creation, birth—the formation of new land. There's nothing grander; once lava gets in your blood you've had it. What hooked me more than anything besides the sight was the smell, the fragrance of new earth. If you really want to come for a treat, come late in the day, walk out to the flow area, and just plant yourself and wait until dark—that's when magic happens. It's unbelievable, fantastic. In the day you might be hooked in the lip, but at night you'll swallow that hook."

BARBADOS

DR. HENRY FRASER is an author and the president of the Barbados National Trust, which preserves the island's historic buildings.

"Every winter, between January and April, the Barbados National Trust has a series of open houses, where some of the finest examples of good local architecture are open to the public. We open houses ranging from the grand St. Nicholas Abbey, built around 1660—one of three Jacobean houses in the Western Hemisphere—to the fantastic Palladian mansion of the founder of the trust, built in 1947.

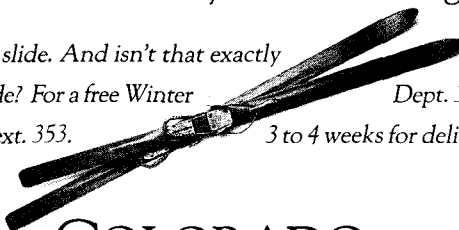
"Certainly the building that I most enjoy showing to people now is a very exciting building built in 1854 which was the residence of the only Prime Minister of the West Indies Federation, Sir Grant Lee Adams. He moved into that house on his marriage, in 1929, and it was the Adams family home until his widow, Lady Adams, died, in March, 1990. It has remained virtually unchanged over that period. It is a unique architectural gem. It's a kind of Palladian-inspired house, but built very much with the tropics in mind. Instead of being very grand and very high, it is fairly horizontal, with magnificent features such as decorative cast iron and lovely jalousie windows and so on that only someone building for the Caribbean would introduce. It's a magical house—it's certainly my favorite place."



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COLD

COLORADO

DONNA WEINBRECHT, the 1991 World Cup Mogul Champion and one of the U.S. Ski Team's best hopes for an Olympic gold medal in Albertville, spends winters in Killington, Vermont. When skiing out west, some of her favorite spots are in Colorado.

"Steamboat has always been such a family-oriented place, and I feel they have a really nice set-up. There are nice homes, people live there year-round. I like the warmth about Steamboat—it's a nice place if you want to get away. I also really like Vail. The ski area is fantastic—go for the skiing. You have diversity: the big bowls in the back, open fields, powder. For my ability there's lots of expert areas, and then all the lower part of the mountain is intermediate and beginner. I can stay at the top of the mountain and still get a lot of vertical and the runs are long. Telluride is kind of a romantic getaway—it's definitely unique. It's a cowboy town: the buildings have those swinging doors and false fronts. There's good skiing there—a lot of out-of-bounds skiing. It's less crowded and has a lot of diversity."

CALIFORNIA

GLEN PLAKE, who lives in South Lake Tahoe, has been skiing since age two and is an expert "extreme" skier featured in films including *Gonzo to Extremes* and *Dr. Strangelove*.

"My favorite place is probably Mammoth Mountain, in California. Mammoth is the premier spot—it's just amazing. It's a very, very big mountain, open and steep, and it has great views. The snow is typical West Coast snow—it comes in very heavy; we can even get a 14-foot storm. During the storm it's great powder. We have really strong easterly winds,

so Mammoth probably has the best windpack I've ever skied in. It's like skiing on chalk—it's buffed smooth and hard by the wind so it's very firm, but it just shaves off. Mammoth also has the longest season in America. It opens as soon as they have snow and you can ski on July 4th!"

FRANCE

GREG STUMP writes, produces, directs, and shoots numerous ski films, including this year's *Groove Requiem...in the key of ski*. His films are renowned for their "extreme skiing" and worldwide locales. Stump lives in Hawaii and British Columbia.

"If I had to pick a favorite place it would be Chamonix, in the French Alps. I've spent a whole winter there, when we made *Blizzard of Aahhh's*, in 1988. There's incredible steep skiing—it's just amazing. Chamonix is as crowded as any big ski area, but the steep areas aren't skied by many people—they're pretty empty. There are a lot of secret runs that you can get to from the lifts easily. Plus, when you get down to the bottom—when you ski down these little chutes through the woods—you end up in some little pub. Chamonix is pretty filled with foreigners but it's still very French. Culturally it's so great to be out of North America, because skiing in North America is pretty sanitized.

"Chamonix is open all night;

HOW COLD IS COLD?

COLORADO: Minimum and maximum average daily temperature in winter, 10–39°F; average snowfall, 270 inches; official skiing season, late Oct. to June. **CALIFORNIA SKI COUNTRY:** 14–39°F; 400–500 inches; Nov. to June. **CHAMONIX:** 20°F; 350 inches; mid-Dec. to mid-May. **VERMONT:** 9–29°F; 225 inches; mid-Nov. to early April. **UTAH:** 20–37°F; 300–600 inches; mid-Nov. to late May. ■ The coldest recorded temperature in the U.S. is –80°F, at Prospect Creek, Alaska. ■ The ski tow was invented in Vermont, in 1934, by skiers experimenting with a Model T engine and a cable.

there's tons of young people there. In Le Brévent, a bar and restaurant nicknamed the 'Avalanche Ranch,' there are skis nailed to the ceiling that all have some unique story to them: one guy survived an avalanche; there are record speed skis and downhill skis, Olympic medal winners' skis."

VERMONT

JERRY GREENFIELD, one half of the Ben & Jerry's Ice Cream team, made all the ice cream when their first parlor opened, in 1978, in Burlington, Vermont. He now lives in Williston.



Skier Marjie Noble demonstrating "extreme" skiing at Chamonix, in the French Alps

CHRIS NOBLE

"I tend not to do anything flashy. My favorite thing to do is sledding. I usually go down my driveway, but I also go to local places: the golf course, friends' houses, and just find a hill. It's very hilly—Vermont ain't flat. I really like my sled that's like an inner tube—it gives a very smooth ride, it absorbs all the shock. You don't have much control, but then you don't have much control on any sled. Ben and I were on a toboggan once in Saratoga County, New York, when we ran into this giant, tree-like, man-eating bush. We've never been the same since. I also like cross-country skiing at the Trapp Family Lodge, in Stowe—you know, 'The hills are alive.' It has really beautiful trails and when you're done you can go inside and have something good to eat—it's a real nice, different sort of feeling."

UTAH

CRAIG KELLY, four-time World Champion Snowboarder and 1991 U.S. Pro Team Overall Champion, has been snowboarding since 1981. Kelly lives in Mt. Vernon, Washington.

"My favorite place would have to be Powder Mountain, in Utah. I went to Utah for a snowboarding competition in Park City about five years ago and the local snowboarders told me I had to go visit Powder Mountain. They said it was such a good place to snowboard and had so much powder—which it really did. The place is small, out of the way, not too crowded—and they get as much snow and powder as the other ski areas in Utah, which is saying a lot. Anyone who's been a snowboarder for any length of time definitely looks for powder; that's the best type of snow to ride in. Powder Mountain has a lot of tree runs that hold the powder really well—they tend not to get tracked up as fast as open glades would. They've also got a lot of rolling hills and knolls to jump off of, and a manmade snowboarding half-pipe. It's a locals kind of area—I prefer that type of environment for good snowboarding."

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A haveli, one of many sandstone mansions in the desert town of Jaisalmer, Rajasthan

EXOTIC

INDIA

MADHUR JAFFREY is an actress, travel writer, and cookbook author. Her latest book is *Madhur Jaffrey's Cookbook* (Harper & Row, 1989). This winter she will be hosting the PBS Travel Series episode *Listening to Volcanoes*. Born and raised in India, Jaffrey returns and travels there frequently.

"I would suggest that before you leave for India, you talk to some Indians in this country and see if they have friends or relatives living in India that you might stay with. Visiting a home is very important. To have contacts will allow you to see India from the inside. I also suggest that you go to Rajasthan, which is a wonderful place, especially in the winter months. It is a desert area in the northwest—an old feudal part of India which seems a little like the Old West in this country. It's very colorful, with many beautiful old palaces. There is a wonderful train, an old royal palace train, which you can take. Rajasthan is an absolute must destination, especially before it spoils. Another destination which I might

suggest is the state of Kerala, on the southwest coast. Kerala is very lush and tropical, with inland waterways and palms that swing over the canals. There are many lovely beaches. These two very different places would make a wonderful holiday."

CHILE

JORGE COULON is a member of the Chilean musical group Inti-Illimani. He plays Colombian treble guitar, Colombian harp, and several other instruments. After a 15-year exile, in Italy, the group returned to Chile three years ago.

"You would have to visit, above all, San Pedro de Atacama. It's in the highland region, near Bolivia, which also happens to be desert. There is much to learn there from the vestiges of Indian and pre-Incan cultures, like the Ayamara. It is where we go first to inspire ourselves for making music. But the most important vestige of ancient cultures that Chile has is Easter

Island. The story of the *moai* is fascinating; the statues were carved in stone from the craters of volcanoes, carried for kilometers, and erected facing Polynesia. The human effort necessary for that is difficult to imagine.

"We lived in Rome during the period of dictatorship and returned to Chile in 1988. When we were living abroad, each of us had a different place that we dreamed of seeing again. I grew up in the lake district in the south, in a city called Temuco, so I had a great desire to return there. But I also longed to live on the ocean, the beautiful, violent Pacific."

SOUTH AFRICA

J.M. COETZEE was born in South Africa and is the author of numerous works of fiction about his native country. His latest book is *Age of Iron* (Random House, 1990). Coetzee is currently a visiting professor of English at Harvard University.

"Within easy distance of Cape Town lies spectacular and rewarding biking country. The circuit of the Cape Peninsula includes cliffside coastal roads that rival the Corniche Esterel, above Cannes, in grandeur. If you are visiting in March, join in the Argus Cycle Tour, one of the largest amateur bicycle tours in the world (14,000 entrants last year, including an eight-year-old who completed the 80-mile circuit in under five hours).

"Or drive inland an hour and do a tour of the winelands, passing through picturesque Stellenbosch and Paarl, stopping for lunch and a siesta in Franschhoek, and tackling the third side of the triangle, Hell's Heights—not as daunting as they sound—as afternoon shadows lengthen.

CLIMATES OF EXOTICISM **RAJASTHAN:** Minimum and maximum average daily temperature in U.S. winter, 45–90°F. **EASTER ISLAND:** 60–83°F. **CAPETOWN:** 60–68°F. **YUCATAN:** 62–83°F. **SYDNEY:** 65–78°F. ■ Kruger National Park, in South Africa, approximately the size of Massachusetts, has the largest variety of wildlife of any game park in Africa. ■ Between 5,000 and 6,000 known fiestas are celebrated annually in Mexico. ■ There is no inhabited land within 1,200 miles of Easter Island. It is the world's most isolated island. ■ Every day 11 million people take trains in India.

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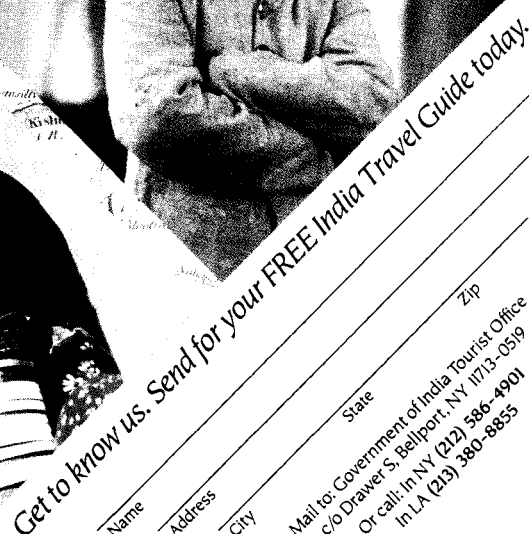
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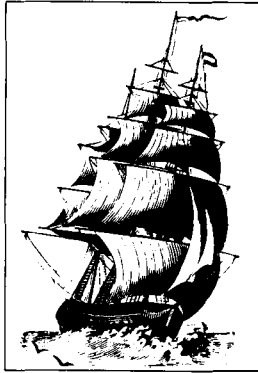
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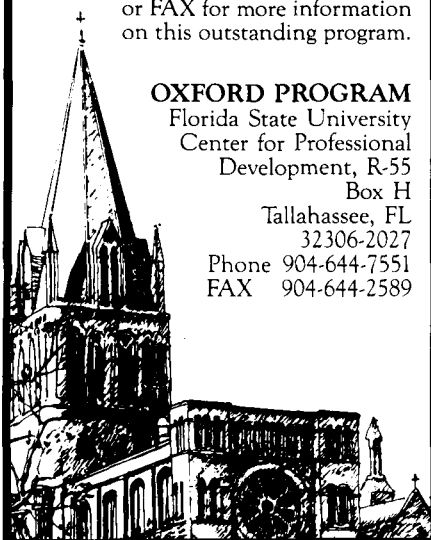


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MEXICO

DAVID STUART, a Mayan epigrapher and scholar, has since childhood worked and traveled extensively in Central America. Following his most recent stint of hieroglyphic decipherment, in Guatemala, he vacationed in Mexico.

"Veracruz and southern Mexico

ley. That's one of my favorite drives in Mexico. It takes four or five hours.

"Yucatán is really its own little territory—culturally, economically, and climatically. The food reflects that, too. It's not what you would expect Mexican food to be like. It's not hot and spicy; it's interesting combinations of things. I like something called *sopa de lima*. It's got tortillas, chicken, and a lime-like fruit. It's a typical Yucatecan dish. There are all sorts of native Mayan dishes, like chicken *pibil*. *Pibil* means it's cooked underground, wrapped in banana pieces.

"The people are always so friendly, so wonderful. If you take roads away from the main highway, you come across some charming towns with colonial churches, towns that haven't changed too much in the last couple hundred years! It's a very open place. You will be well received."

AUSTRALIA

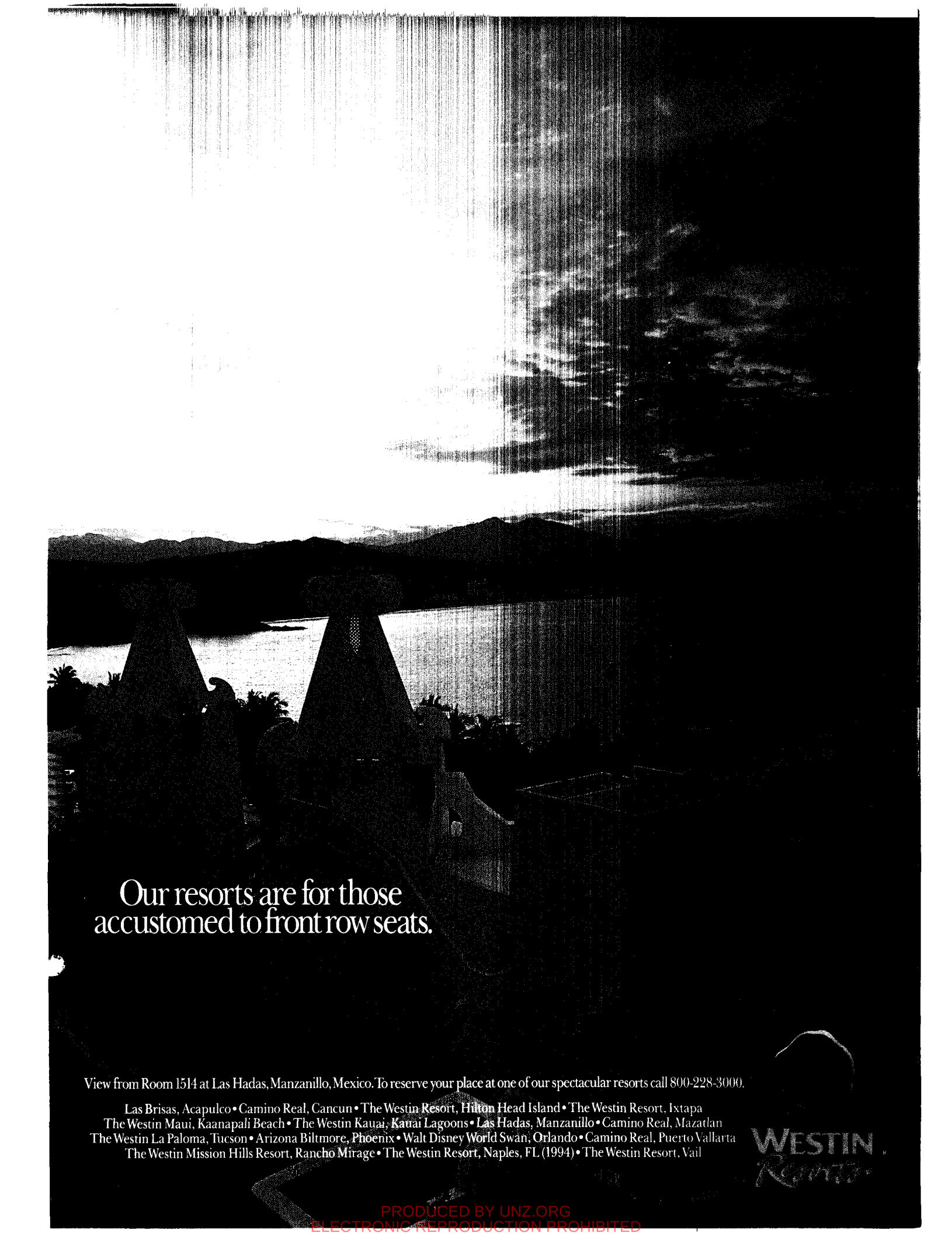
GABRIELLA ROY is an art dealer at the Aboriginal Artists Gallery, in Sydney. A native Australian, Roy is well-versed in her country's culture.

"The best galleries to see Aboriginal art or to buy it are in Sydney. There is the Aboriginal Artists Gallery, on Kent Street; the Hogarth Gallery, in Paddington; and the Cooe Gallery, also in Paddington. For the more adventuresome, there are caves and sites in Arnhem Land and the Northern Territory. By seeing the art there, you see it in its natural setting. This is more appealing and more of a learning experience. The best places for art are in the Kakadu National Park or the Alligator River. In Kakadu, the best sites are Cannon Hill and Nourlangie Rock. There are also hundreds of sites near Ayers Rock. In Western Australia and in Arnhem Land, sometimes a guide or a permit may be required—it is best to inquire of the local tourist board."

Interviews conducted by Dan O'Kane, Liam O'Malley, Reuben Steiger, Lowell Weiss, and Karen Wesolowski. We extend special thanks, for their help in research, to Amy Grossman, Ann Leopold, Karin Meckeler, and Christine Tedesco.

At the Museum of Anthropology, Xalapa

are my favorite. There's a town in Veracruz, it's the capital of the state, called Xalapa. There is a wonderful new museum there, with sculptures and pottery. It's one of the best archaeological museums in Mexico. In the state of Chiapas there are lots of really fabulous ruins. There is especially one route where the setting of the mountains is just gorgeous. It's a drive between the towns of Palenque, where there is a very important ruin, and San Cristóbal de las Casas. You go from sea level up to a few thousand feet in a few hours, from jungle up to pine forests. The other spectacular ruin is less well-known. It's called Toniná; it's right next to Ocosingo, in a really nice val-



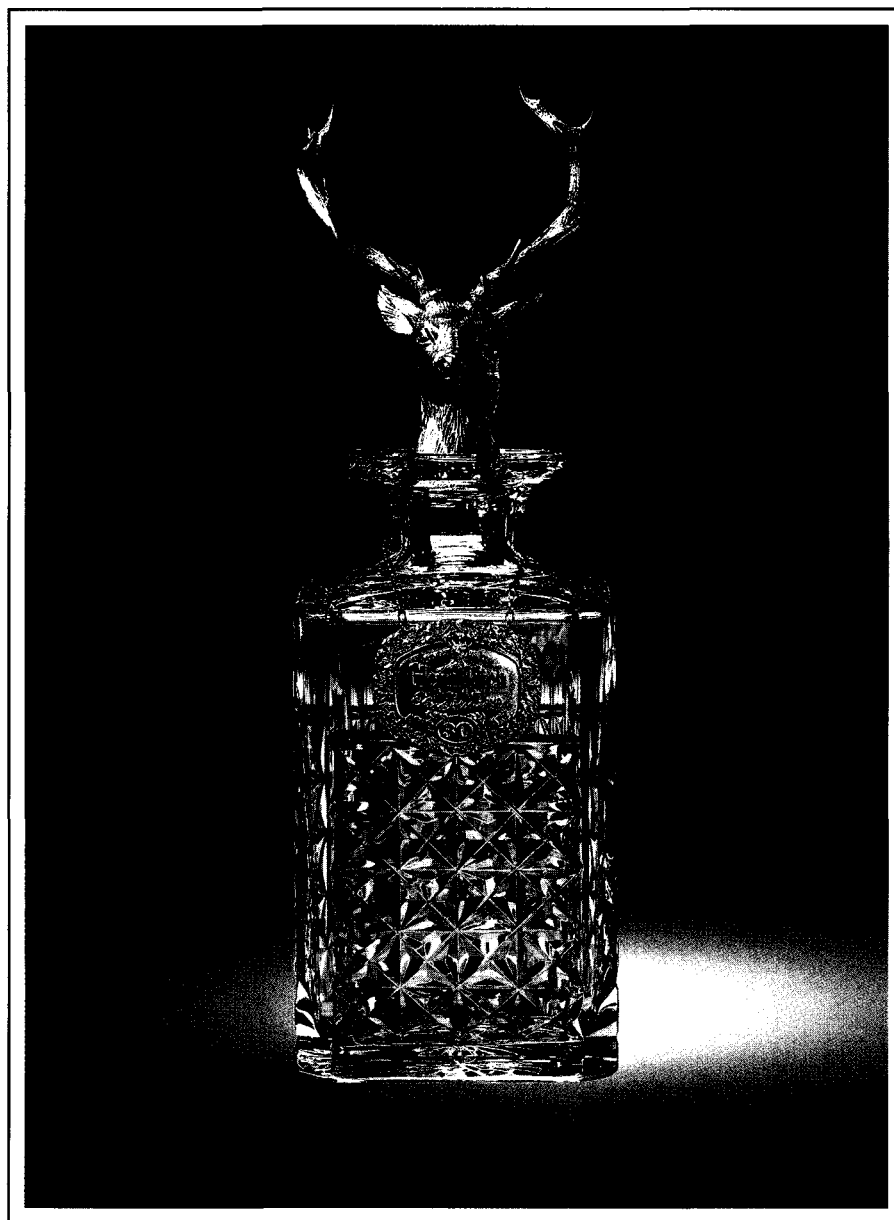
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It is the hottest place in the world, and the driest. It is home to thriving commerce and to desperate, hopeless poverty. It is the Sahara, an eternal source of fascination and terror

THE WORLD IN ITS EXTREME

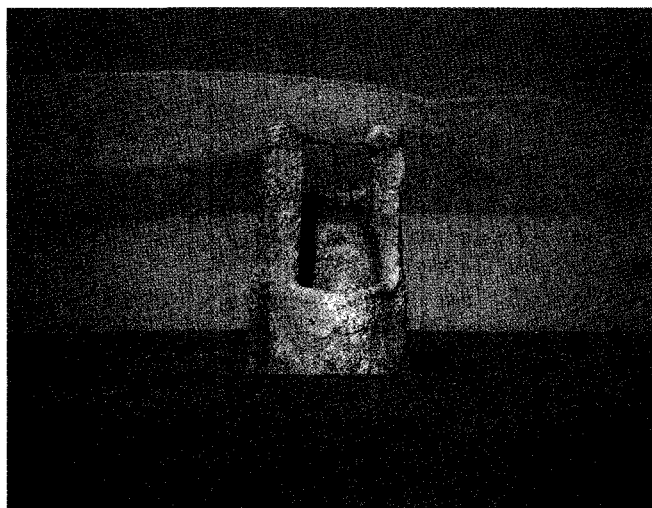
BY WILLIAM LANGEWIESCHE

THE SAHARA IS A DESERT SO VAST THAT NO AIRPLANE CAN DIMINISH IT. CERTAINLY this one couldn't. I sat behind the pilots in the cockpit of an Air Algeria turboprop lumbering at 18,000 feet across southern Algeria. The airplane was a Dutch-built Fokker 27, a stodgy forty-passenger twin, doing 220 miles an hour; it had come from the capital city, Algiers, on a roundabout three-day run to the oases. Now we were bound for Adrar, an oasis remarkable even here for heat and lack of rain. It was midday, midsummer. Outside, the Sahara stretched

in naked folds to the horizon, brilliant and utterly still. It was blanketed by a haze of dust, suspended not by winds but by heat. The only sign of people was a trace of smoke rising in the distance. Below us a canyon cut through the downslope of the Hoggar Mountains. To the south lay the Tan-zrouft, a plain so barren that drivers in the open desert mistake stones for diesel trucks, and so lonely that, it is said, migrating birds land beside people just for the company.

The captain wore a white shirt with epaulets. He had pasty skin and the look of an experienced pilot—bored, dissatisfied, underexercised. He flew with sloppy control motions, like someone enduring a machine that he does not like. For him this was a tough assignment. He was from Algiers, which is on the coast, and had not had time to acclimatize. He must have suffered at night in the oasis hotels.

For me the flight was a luxury. I leaned over the ventilator and enjoyed the coolness, knowing it wouldn't last. We had come to a road called the Trans-Saharan, a faint scar



WATER WELL, EASTERN ALGERIA

running north-south across the desert. It was a route I had traveled by bus and truck. Maps show it in bold ink, like an established highway, but much of the pavement is broken and unusable. Across the center of the Sahara it dissolves into bands of braided tracks. Drivers get lost, and each year some die of thirst.

"There is nothing out here," the captain complained. He spoke French, which is the second language of the Sahara, after Arabic.

I thought, Nothing here? But this is the Trans-Saharan, the route of dreams, a way across the desert! On earlier trips I had felt every mile of it. I remembered one ride on a truck, in a passenger box thick with heat, bodies, and dust. We laughed when the first bump threw us from the benches; the second bump smashed us against the ceiling, and suddenly it was no longer funny. For two days we held on, waiting for the pounding to end. That was the worst. Elsewhere in the Sahara I had felt other miles—by foot, communal taxi, cargo truck, moped, even river steamer. I had come to the Sahara as others

might travel to the Himalayas, to see the world in its extreme. There is no other place as hot and dry and empty. There are few places as hostile to life. Yet it is lived in.

The captain was disgusted by the place. He said, "You let a sheet of paper fall and it takes forever to hit the ground. It's the heat." He tried to be polite. He asked me about the condition of the road. He asked me where I had been and where I was going, and why. He knew I was a writer, and also a pilot, and this made him doubly distrustful. Why would a pilot travel so much by ground? And what was there to say about such emptiness? I tried to explain. He seemed worried about me.

I worry too. The problem is not how little there is to say but how much—not how empty the Sahara is but how complex. Geographers still disagree about the most basic terms. For instance, if "desert" is defined by dryness, should the pluviometric threshold be six inches of rain a year or twice as much? Should "desert" be defined by variability of rainfall? By rates of evaporation? By hours of sunshine? Or should we choose a human standard and define deserts as places we can neither plant nor settle without irrigation?

Underlying these choices is the question of whether isometric lines drawn on a map can ever encompass the real thing. Describe the Sahara? We can't even measure it. Keeping this in mind, here are a few facts:

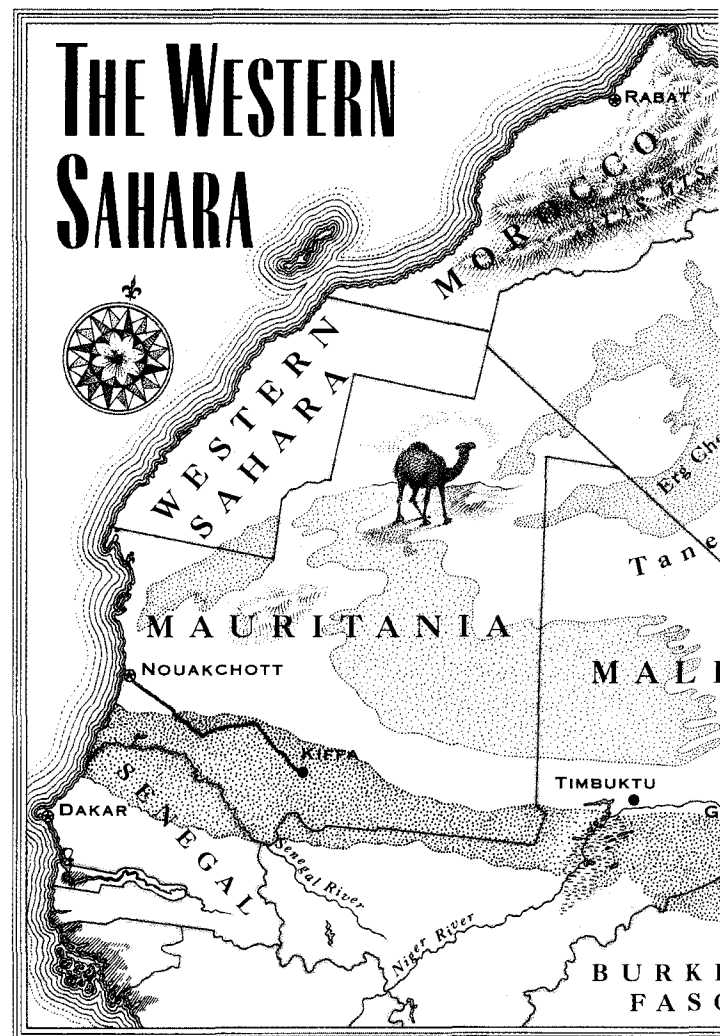
- The Sahara is the world's largest desert, about the size of the United States including Alaska. It fills the northern third of Africa, stretching 3,100 miles from the Atlantic to the Red Sea. In the north it is bounded by the Atlas Mountains and the Mediterranean. In the south it encounters no geographic barrier. There it has expanded into the populated grasslands of the Sahel, uprooting millions of people, throwing them against one another, and spawning wars. Expansion, which is apparently the result of long-term climatic changes, accelerated by overpopulation, overgrazing, and deforestation, is neither uniform nor ineluctable. There are years even now when rainfall and vegetation push the desert back. From north to south the Sahara is at present about 1,200 miles deep.

- There are two central mountain ranges. The Hoggar Mountains, of southern Algeria, climb to 9,852 feet, and the Tibesti, of northern Chad, culminate at 11,204 feet, the highest point in the desert. The rest of the Sahara is flat, made up of plateaus and low hills covered mostly by gravel and rock. Only a fifth of it is sand, formed into dune seas known as ergs. One fifth is still a lot of territory. The Libyan erg alone is the size of France.

- The Sahara is geologically ancient. Its basement is gently arching granite, dating back five billion years to the beginning of geologic history. As the continents drifted and the global climate shifted, northern Africa became ocean, forest, lake, swamp, desert, and ocean again. A series of inundations over millions of years laid down the sedimentary plains visible today. The rocks

hold mineral riches: oil and natural gas in the north, uranium in the south, iron and phosphate in the west. For the desert people, the most important discoveries have been the vast aquifers in the north.

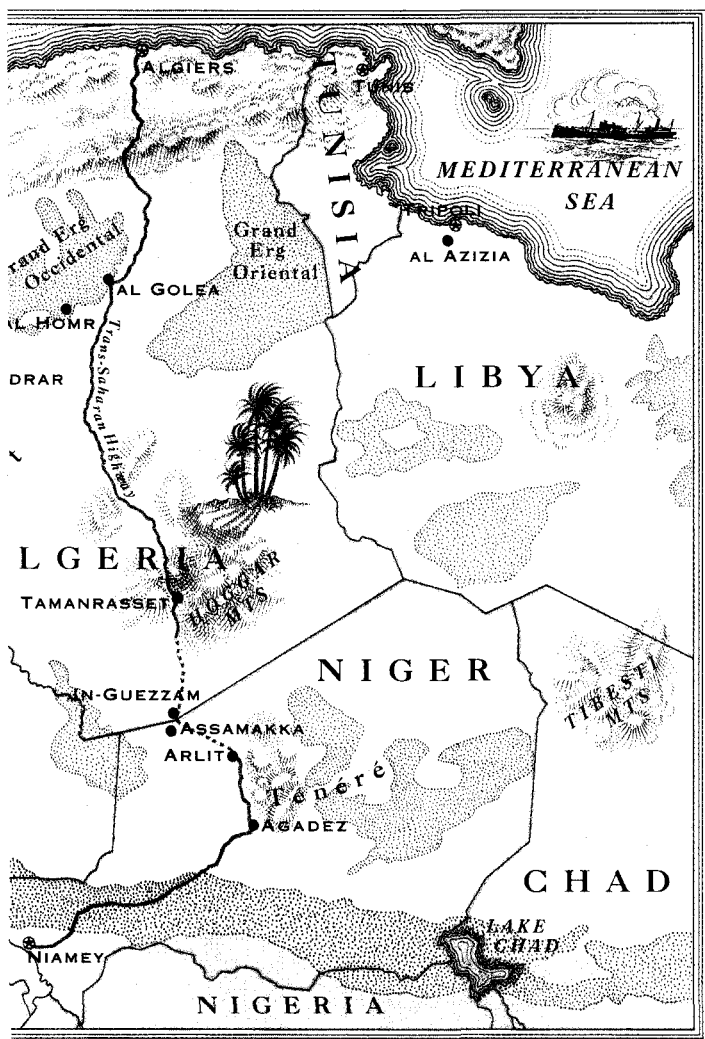
- Unlike deserts caused by features of topography, the Sahara is a weather desert, caused by the flow and physics of the atmosphere. Imagine it as a solar-powered air pump. The thermal equator, a line connecting the hottest points on the globe, runs through Africa ten to twenty degrees north of the geographic equator—in other words, just south of the Sahara. As air is heated along this



line, it rises. As it rises, it cools, and forms rainstorms. These storms define the southern limit of the desert. Meanwhile, at the surface the rising air sucks in dense Saharan winds from the north. These winds in turn are replenished by the air directly overhead. Since the sinking air contains virtually no moisture, northern Africa is a desert. The weather is a closed loop, completed far above the surface by southerly winds.

- Evaporation rates in the Sahara are the highest in the world. The relative humidity averages 30 percent, and it has been recorded as low as 2.5 percent. If you measure

dryness by the net yearly amount of radiant heat at the surface versus the amount of heat that would be necessary to evaporate the annual rainfall—the so-called dryness ratio—the excess evaporative power of the Sahara ranges from a factor of ten to infinity. The ratio is high partly because there is so little rain. Most of the Sahara receives less than three inches a year. (New York's annual rainfall is forty-three inches.) Even the wettest areas, along the outer edges, suffer from unreliability: it may rain today and next week, and then not again for years. There are large areas where nothing grows. At the center



ILLUSTRATED MAP BY LASZLO KUBINYI

of the Sahara are 800,000 square miles of hyperarid plateaus, some of which have been practically sterilized by drought. In such places bacteria die quickly, and cadavers, partly mummified, decompose slowly. Think of sun-dried apricots.

- In the open desert the most successful animals are human beings. The most common are mice, ants, and flies. There are also jackals, bats, lizards, vipers, long-legged spiders, and scorpions. Butterflies and birds fly long distances across the worst terrain. Antelopes, mountain sheep, ostriches, and foxes, once widespread, have fallen

to the repeating rifle and the all-terrain vehicle. Of the large Saharan mammals only gazelles remain, and they, too, are being hunted into oblivion. Camels do not exist in a wild state. They may roam at large, but they are bred and branded. Camels are valuable, because they endure in the desert almost as well as Toyotas.

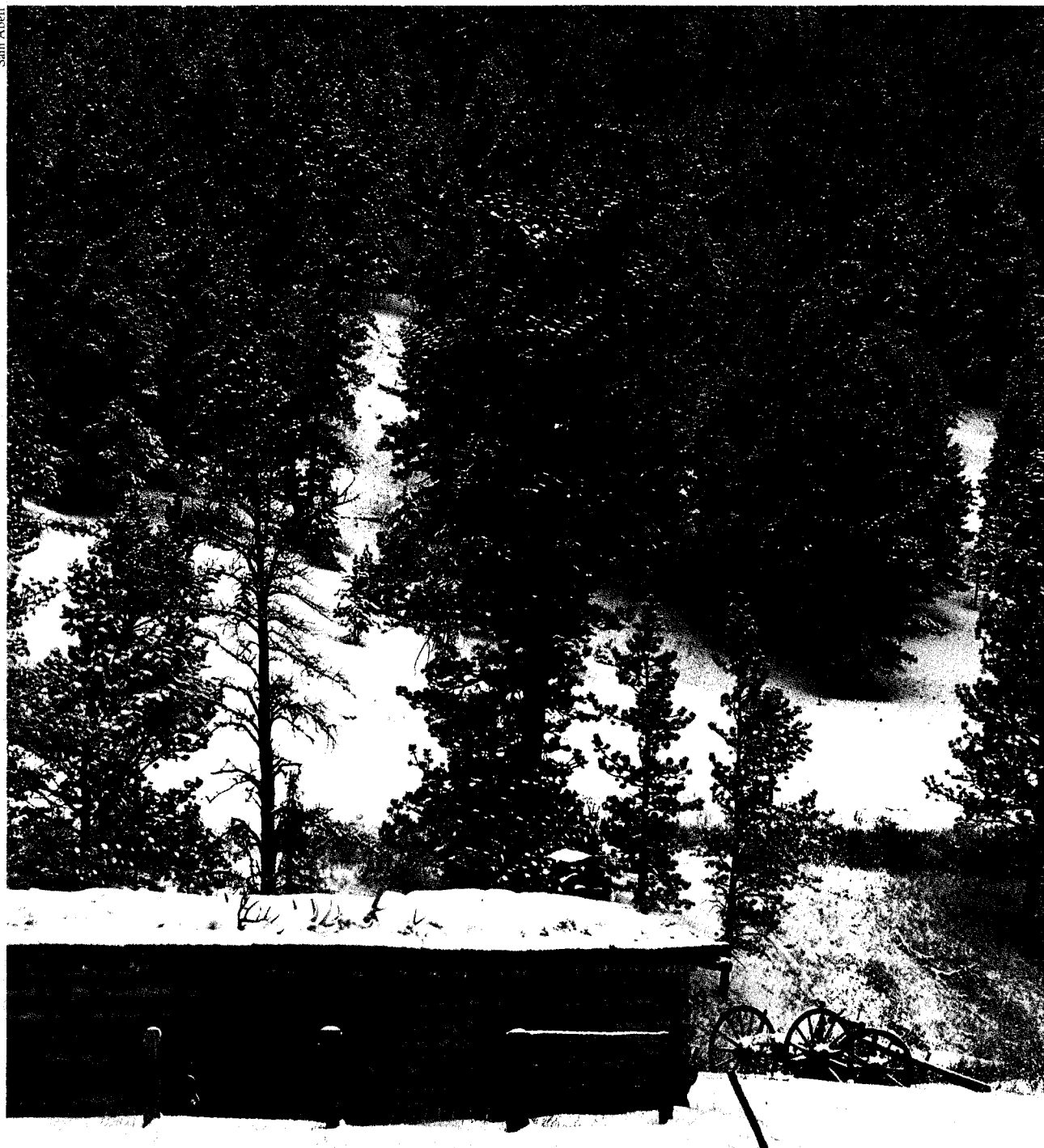
OF THE TWENTY PASSENGERS ABOARD THE AIR ALGERIA Fokker only one was a woman, and she was veiled. She sat stiffly, not daring to look outside, while her children wandered the aisle. The men seated near her wore white robes and turbans. They were Arabized Berbers and Berberized blacks—traders, students, soldiers on leave. Some had the beards of the Islamic revival. In the back sat four Tuaregs, lanky, fine-featured nomads of the central Sahara. They smelled of wood-smoke, and wore *chèches*, long cotton strips wrapped around the head and forward across the nose and mouth. The *chèche* is more than an answer to sun and dust; it masks the wearer and gives him the power of anonymity. The Tuareg are renowned warriors. They fought off the French into this century. Now, across the Tanezrouft, in Mali and Niger they have risen again in rebellion against the central governments.

The Tuareg are Berbers too, like most people in the Sahara. "Berber" is a broad descriptive term that includes a wide range of groups descended from Eurasian horsemen who arrived 3,000 years ago. It derives from *barbarus*, Latin for "foreign and uncivilized," and, unintentionally, it still expresses a common attitude toward North Africans. Saharans are also called Arabs, which might be a more polite label. The Arabs are if anything overcivilized. Their armies came to the northern Sahara in the seventh century A.D. Though the armies didn't stay long, Arabs interbred with the Berbers, and imported a language, a culture, and a new religion—Islam. Over the following centuries this potent Arab combination spread south, gradually weakening and replacing the Berber traditions. Today, although there may yet exist in the Sahara some "pure" Arabs, and there are a good many pure Berbers, the majority of the Sahara's population represents a mixture to some degree.

The Sahara is an Islamic desert, but this does not mean that it is a unified desert. Throughout the Sahara you hear the refrain "Our Islam is the true Islam," implying that the neighbors' is not. The neighborhood consists of ten sometimes unfriendly nations. Recent events in the Persian Gulf have heightened their differences. As you might suspect by looking at a map, the borders between them are arbitrary. They were drawn to meet the needs of colonial administration, and they remain wild and unmarked. Nonetheless, when you cross one, what is surprising is not how little the desert changes but how much the context does.

In the south are four landlocked countries—Mali, Niger, Chad, and Sudan. These are miserable places, bear-

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ing the brunt of the desert's expansion and plagued by civil wars. Along the coastline are the five countries of the Mahgreb: Mauritania, Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, and Libya. None is happy. Mauritania is brutal and xenophobic; Morocco suffers under a reactionary king; Algeria and Tunisia are politically and economically bankrupt; Libya, the only wholly Saharan nation, has been cursed with Muammar Qaddafi. Egypt, to the east, along the Nile, is a riverine society with problems too intricate and particular to summarize here.

Throughout the Sahara a sense of change is in the air. Socialism, liberalism, and military rule have failed. Pan-Arabism has proved to be an empty promise. But over the past few years a potent ideology has resurfaced—Islamic fundamentalism. Islam is a religion that provides for both law and government. Ever since the Iranian revolution it has taken on new relevance, as an alternative to the models of the West, as a homegrown answer to disorder, corruption, and inequality. The large, vigorous fundamentalist movement has become the dominant political factor in the Sahara.

North African fundamentalists are Sunni Muslims, less frantic than the Shiites of Lebanon and Iran. No one knows what will result if they take over. Will there be more Irans—radical, repressive, and hostile to the West? Or will something new and more benign be created? In Algeria the Islamic party may eventually seize power. An Islamic government there would have profound—perhaps revolutionary—effects on the entire region.

Water in Adrar

ADRAR IS A PROVINCIAL CAPITAL IN CENTRAL ALGERIA, a town of 15,000, laid out in wide streets between other buildings. It sits at the center of a region of oases known as the Touat, astride an ancient caravan route from Gao and Timbuktu. I went there to look at irrigation. My host was a young merchant,

Moulay Lakhdar Miloud. Moulay is a title of respect. There are a lot of Moulays, and many seem to know one another. I once heard the Sahara described as the United States of Moulay.

Moulay Miloud is a bachelor with a narrow, intelligent face and a moustache. His friends call him Uncle Moulay. He was dressed in a pressed white robe. We sat on the floor of his living room and waited out the hot midday hours, drinking brown water from a plastic jug. The water was brown because Miloud had mixed in cade oil. The cade is an evergreen bush that grows in the Atlas

Mountains. Saharan nomads use its oil to seal the inside of goatskin water bags. Miloud did not have a goatskin, but he came from a long line of desert travelers. He bought the oil in small bottles and added it to his water for flavor and good health. The mixture smelled of pine sap and tasted of clay. Miloud smiled, pleased that I liked it. But I would have drunk anything. I had been for a walk.

"It's raining less," Miloud said. "And every year it's hotter. Nomads can no longer survive this climate."

I believed him.

The house, like Miloud, was small and immaculate. It had a fan and an evaporative cooler. The living room was furnished Saharan style, with mattresses, pillows, and colorful rugs. Black-and-white enlargements of nomads hung on the stucco walls. A guitar stood in the corner. *The Cosby Show*, which

is broadcast by national television, flickered soundlessly on a TV screen. A stereo played screechy Saharan music. In the hallway, by a portrait of Bob Marley, was a postcard of three naked women. They were grotesquely fat. Miloud said, "In the summer even the mind shuts down. You get tired of television, music, and books. There is no stimulation. There is little to say. You are too much indoors."

For good reason. Outdoors the temperature was 124° Fahrenheit. During my walk the air had been still, the sky milky with dust. There was no shade. The streets



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were deserted. The heat hit hard, a physical assault, burning skin, eyes, and lungs. I felt threatened and disoriented. I had drunk my fill beforehand, but an hour without water was all I could stand.

The Sahara is hot because it is sunny. In Adrar out of some 4,400 hours of annual daylight there are 3,978 hours of direct sun, on average. (Paris, home of the great Saharan colonizers, gets 1,728 hours of sun.) Elsewhere in the desert the count is equally high. And this is steep-angle sunlight, powerful stuff. In the winter, air temperatures can drop to freezing at night and rise to 90° by noon; soil temperatures can fluctuate so brutally that rocks split, a process called insolation weathering. In the summer the Sahara is the hottest place on earth. The record, 136° Fahrenheit, is held by al Azizia, Libya. Airborne dust makes things worse. It traps heat radiated by the hot soil, and is why in Adrar the desert does not cool much on summer nights.

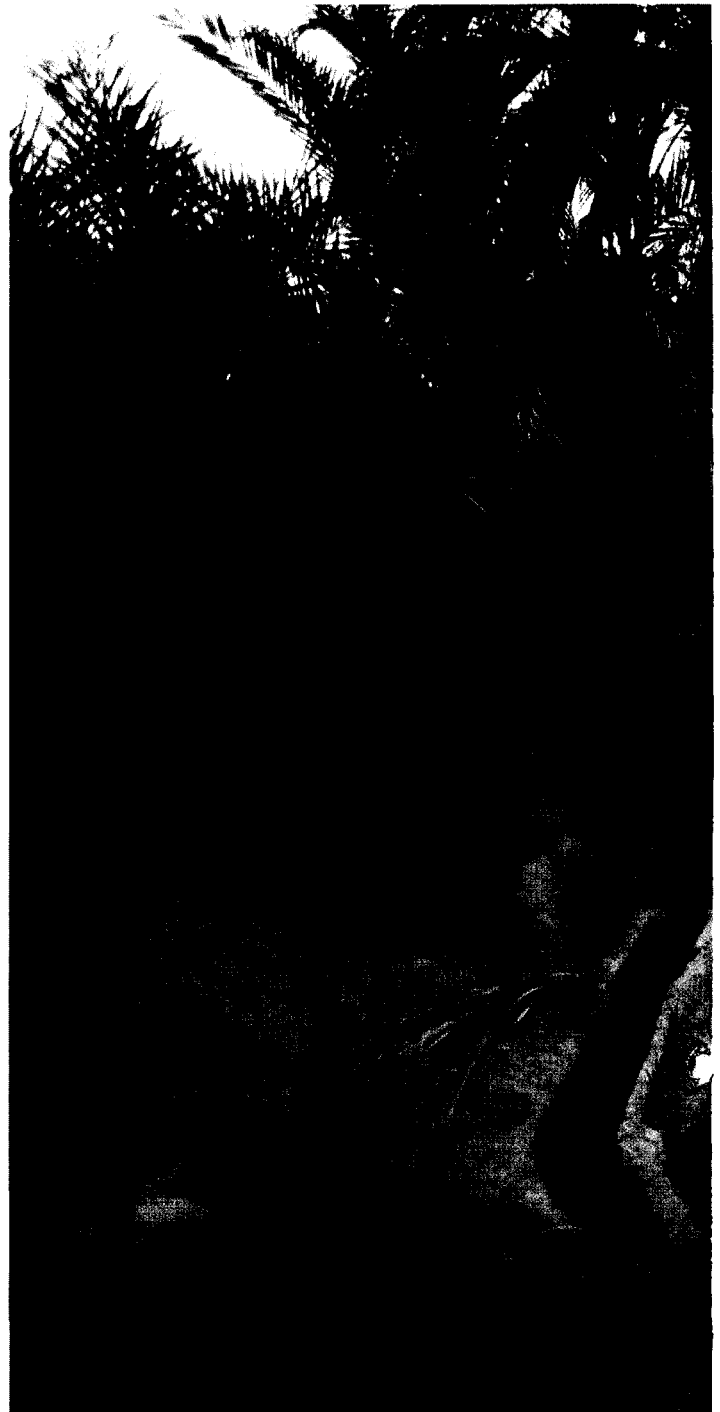
Late in the afternoon Miloud and I drove an old Renault to one of the outlying oases. The road was paved. It led past neglected palm groves and then across rolling sand and dirt. In the far distance I could make out the dunes of the Erg Chech, the enormous and uninhabited sand sea that extends 600 miles, across Mali and into Mauritania. Miloud said, of the land on either side of the road, "In the winter all this is green." Translation: if it rains, a few translucent grasses may sprout. The average annual rainfall in Adrar is less than an inch.

The two dozen oases of the Touat sit at the receiving end of the largest dry watercourse in the Sahara, an ancient riverbed called the Messaoud. It is a long, shallow depression where water still lies close underground. Oases are not the waterholes of public imagination but irrigated groves of date palms. They are artificial creations. The ones in the Touat are famous for the engineering of their traditional wells. Known as foggaras, these are gently sloping tunnels, burrowed for miles into higher terrain. Since their paths are marked by frequent mounds around excavation shafts, they look like the diggings of giant moles. The foggaras were built centuries ago, not to find water but to bring it to the oases in a constant flow. They are self-filling subterranean aqueducts. They are not, however, self-maintaining.

Our destination appeared as a green line against the dusty sky. The line became a palm grove and an ancient fortified village, or *ksar*, of about a thousand people. In searing heat we walked through the streets—a warren of baked mud and dark, built-over passages just wide enough for a loaded camel to pass. There were no camels now, only a few sad donkeys hauling firewood. The inhabitants were Haratin blacks, descendants of slaves, who still occupy the lowest level of Saharan society. Racism exists throughout the desert, though it is tempered somewhat by the egalitarian precepts of Islam. I do not

mean to suggest that modern Islam has brought enlightenment to the Sahara. Fundamentalism never seems to promote understanding. But Saharan society is noticeably different from ours in the way it is softened by the vitality of its religion.

A band of dusty children followed us into the desert to the foggaras. Water was still flowing, but the foggaras were slipping into disrepair. One reason is that maintaining them—digging them out, shoring them up—is dangerous and difficult work, and since the abolition of slavery there has been no ready supply of labor. A more



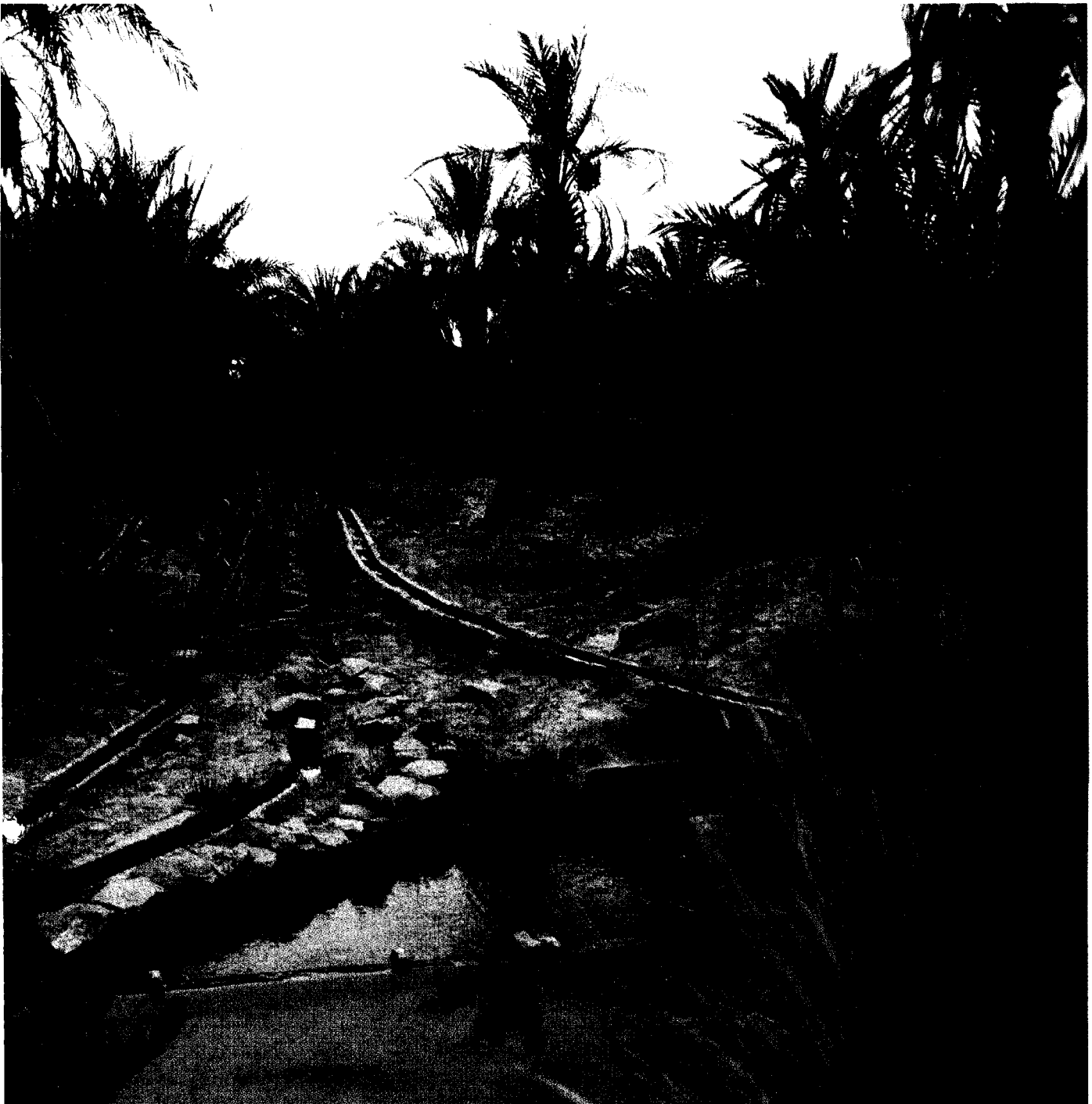
DATE-PALM GROVE, ADRAR

immediate reason was in the concrete shelter nearby. It housed an electric pump, drawing water from a bored well. The modern world had arrived, and no one was complaining.

The system of distribution was still the traditional one. We followed the ditches that carried the water back to the village. Upstream it was drawn for drinking; downstream it was used for washing and sewage. The water that finally flowed toward the palm grove was, let's say, rich in nutrients. It was also precious. Water rights are inherited, bought, and sold, and are more valuable than

the land itself. Within the grove the water is divided and metered through finger-width gateways into an intricate branching of channels. In the end it spreads into individual plots, separated by dikes and protected against wind and sand by adobe walls. There the date palms grow.

Date palms are well adapted to the Sahara. They thrive on sun and heat, and will produce fruit in water that is ten times as salty as human beings should drink. Though they require large amounts of irrigation for the first few years, they then tap into groundwater and be-



come self-supporting. They also shade the irrigated vegetable crops—most commonly corn and tomatoes.

This grove was small by Algerian standards—about a half square mile of junglelike vegetation. We strolled through it on dirt paths between the plots. The shade was dense, but it provided no relief from the heat. Dead fronds drooped from the trees and littered the ground. Miloud pointed to them and said that when he was young, the farmers would have been ashamed. Yellow butterflies flitted about. Ants carried oversized trophies. A turbaned man hacked at the earth. A ditch gurgled with polluted water. I stopped to list the other sounds: the distant music of Arab horns, a dove cooing, a donkey braying, a cricket, birds trilling, children laughing, the thunk of a woodchopper, a sharper hammering, a rooster crowing, flies buzzing, a chanted prayer.

EARLY ONE MORNING Miloud and I drank coffee at a café. The conversation turned, as it often does with young Saharans, to religion. I listened and tried to understand. But when Miloud mentioned his hatred for Jews, I answered back. I said that he was mythologizing them. I said that even if, as an Arab, he resented Israel, he had to distinguish Jews from Israel. I said that he even had to distinguish *Israelis* from one another. He retreated to history and talked of what he called ancient crimes—the Jews' unwillingness to accept the new word of God and his Prophet. Muslims have a strictly chronological view of progress: their faith rests in the idea that Mohammed was the final prophet, and that his message supersedes all others. I asked Miloud how he could hold individuals responsible today for the deeds of their distant ancestors. I said, What if I were a Jew? He answered, But you are not. He was unbending, and our arguments became circular.

I remembered a conversation with a policeman in another oasis. He said, "The French? Oh, yes, we fought a war; we hate them."

I asked, "What about the Russians?" The oasis had a military base and a small contingent of Soviet advisers.

"They are godless. We hate them, too."

"And the Germans?"

"They are fascists. We hate them."

"And Americans?"

"Oh, no, Algerians do not hate Americans." He hesitated. "Except for imperialists and Jews—we hate them most of all."

Since there are few Jews remaining in the Sahara, the anti-Semitism there has become somewhat academic. It is disquieting nonetheless. I have friends in the northern Sahara whose daughter is a bright, charming schoolgirl, a picture of sweet innocence. Once when I was over for dinner, she smiled and said, "If an Israeli ever came here, I would . . ."

"What would you do?" her mother asked gently.

"I would *kill* him."

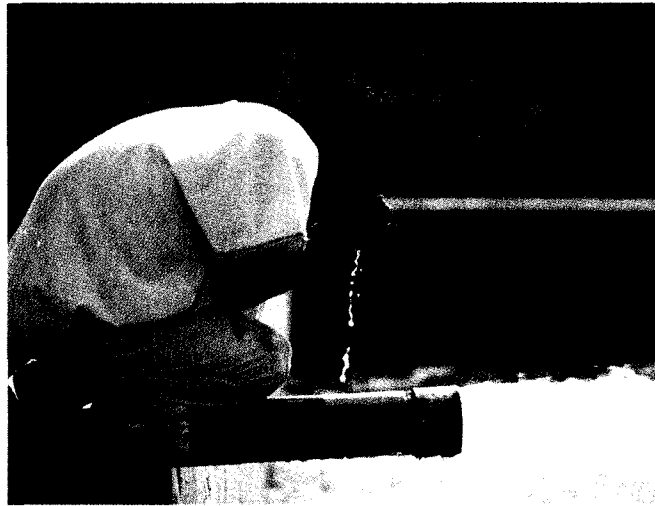
The television news had been filled with brutal home videos of the Intifada, the Palestinian uprising. They have become a staple of Islamic solidarity.

THERE IS A LIMIT TO the insulating qualities of adobe construction, a temperature extreme beyond which walls go critical and begin to magnify the heat. I have

studied this: the walls do not cool down at night; at dawn the inside surfaces are hot to the touch; by day they are hotter still. The houses become solar ovens. Concrete is worse: it gets hotter in sunlight and no less hot after dark. In the big Soviet-style buildings you can burn bare feet on the second floor. Air-conditioners and evaporative coolers are rare, and replacement parts are rarer.

During the peak months of summer people move outdoors. In the morning and late afternoon they sit in the shade cast by the walls. At midday they hide as best they can, under an awning or a tree. Strangers flock to the hotels, where the lobbies have fans and high ceilings. The secret police flock there too, for the same reasons, and also to investigate the strangers. Everyone waits. At night, while hotel guests lie trapped in their rooms, the Saharans eat and sleep in the gardens.

Miloud and I went to dinner in Adrar at the house of Nouari, a bookish construction engineer. He had also invited a tall, shy hydrologist, who the next day was to guide me through a modern irrigated farm north of town. The four of us sat on carpets in the sand behind the house.



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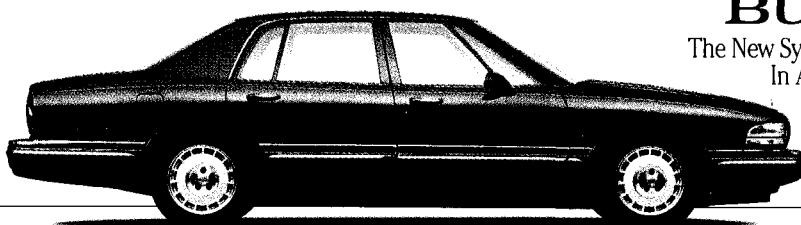
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It was a sweltering night, the temperature still over 100°. The stars were blackened by dust. The meal was lit by kerosene lanterns on a barrel. Nouari's wife and mother cooked for us but did not appear. Sexual apartheid reigns in much of the Sahara, and pudency demands that women stay hidden from male guests. I made no mention of the women. Nouari poured water from a pitcher and we washed our hands.

We started with raw milk and dates. Nouari said, "The Prophet recommended dates."

Miloud added, "Milk and dates make a complete meal. They are all a person needs to eat."

Nonetheless, we also had tripe, couscous, and melon. Afterward we drank tea brewed by Nouari on a butane burner, and the discussion returned to dates.

Dates are so important that oases are measured by the size of their groves. The largest have more than a million trees; the smallest have a thousand. After the Algerian war of independence against the French, which ended in 1962, the groves were nationalized by the socialist regime. Later they were privatized, returned to the original owners, but they have not recovered their earlier glory. The inhabitants of the oases are crazy about their dates. They eat them directly off the branch; they dry them and eat them; they bake, boil, and fry them and eat them. They are date gourmets, and can distinguish hundreds of varieties by taste, texture, and color. They know date facts: that a thousand dates grow in a single cluster, that half the weight of a dried date is sugar, and that dates are rich in minerals and vitamins. Nouari listed them, taking care that I note every one: "Vitamins A, B, C, D, E."

The hydrologist added, "Dates help against cancer. Research is being done in the United States at a big university."

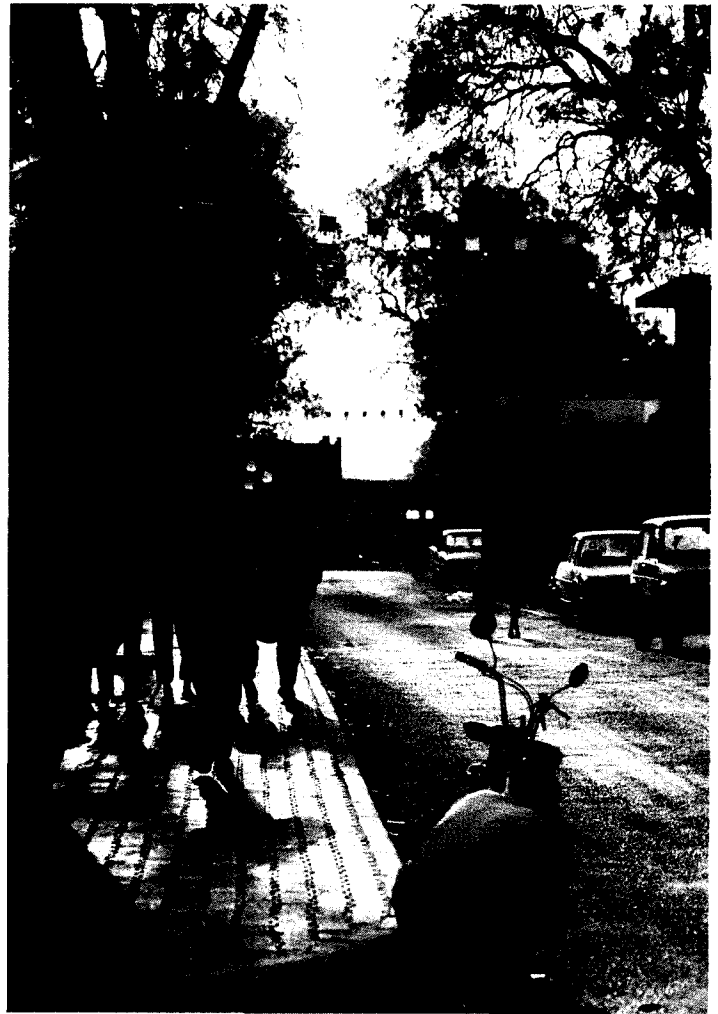
Nouari described the yearly pollination performed by the farmers. He recited the line from the Koran that is read while this is done: "In the name of God, mild and merciful."

Miloud observed that the tree itself is a wonderful resource. With help from the others, he went through all the uses of it. They are too many to list here, but they can be summarized as follows: things that can be done with wood and palm fronds. The hydrologist finished by saying, "The Prophet loved the tree too." It is not surprising that the neglect of the groves in the Sahara has added fuel to the fire of Islamic revolt.

THE HYDROLOGIST'S NAME WAS SOLLAH. IN THE morning he took me to see the irrigated farm, which he called a model. It sprawled across 800 unshaded acres in virgin desert—an American-style operation, privately owned, with a bright tractor and a crew of Haratin black workers. Circular irrigation systems stood over wheat stubble. There were greenhouses, and plots of tomatoes, peppers, pimientos, cucumbers, melons, and cantaloupes. There was plenty of mud. This

was modern agriculture—energetic, productive, and perhaps wasteful. I told Sollah that it looked like farms in California. He was pleased, and asked why. I answered, Cheap water. This pleased him even more, because it was *his* water. He had directed the government crew that drilled the first well.

We went to drink the results. Two pumps drove a heavy flow of water into a holding tank. The water was sweet and cool. They had struck it with an Oklahoman rig at a depth of 450 feet. The water ran dirty with sand and mud for two days, and afterward turned clear. The



THE MAIN STREET OF TAMANRASSET, ALGER

project took a month to complete, which is about average. There are several crews like Sollah's in the province. Together they have been drilling forty-five wells a year. Every well has produced.

Most of the Sahara is too dry for drilling. If you do hit water, either there is too little or it is too salty or too expensive to pump out. It might sustain a few settlers, or people passing through. It is not worth the cost of getting to it. But here, in the northern third of the desert, large reserves of fresh water lie under the parched surface. The shallowest have for centuries irrigated the towns and

oases. They can be got at by foggaras and hand-dug wells. They are susceptible to drought and overuse; the water table falls, crops fail, and settlements must be abandoned. But if it rains, even far away, eventually the shallow reserves are replenished.

Of greater importance for the future are the deep aquifers, whose discovery was a by-product of the search for oil. The mere knowledge of their existence has had a profound effect on life in the Sahara. Known as confined aquifers, they are pools of fresh water trapped in permeable rock strata at depths of 300 to 6,000 feet. They hold



THE GEOGRAPHIC HEART OF THE SAHARA

as much water, according to one estimate, as the Amazon River discharges in two years. That is a lot of water. What's better, much of it is under pressure. Once tapped, it rises to the surface and forms artesian wells. Geysers have shot hundreds of feet into the air. Wells have been capped to keep villages from flooding.

Water works powerfully on the souls of Saharans. Muammar Qaddafi has launched an agricultural revolution in Libya, and is building gigantic irrigation projects. He believes he will transform his sands. If for nothing else, he is respected for this. Other Saharans have equal-

ly grandiose dreams. Miles of tomatoes, potatoes, rice paddies, fish farms, horizons of grain—the United States of Moulay. If there is water in the desert, anything is possible. Sollah, a quiet and rational man, was suffused with the glory of his mission. Even the taxi driver who took us out to the farm had an opinion. He believed that irrigation would eventually bring rain. Call it reverse desertification, the trickle-up theory.

But there is a problem. The deep aquifers are being recharged very slowly, if at all. This means that the aquifers contain mostly fossil water, deposited long ago, when the Sahara was not a desert. The water that Sollah and I were drinking was perhaps 5,000 years old. In western Egypt well water may be five or ten times as old. My comparison to California was only partly correct. Much of the irrigation water in the American desert comes from rivers and reservoirs—short-term, renewable surface supplies. Some waste is perhaps affordable. The deep water of the Sahara is different: you pump it here for keeps. Like oil, it is not renewable.

A second problem is that despite the large reserves, only a small fraction of the stored water can be extracted economically. There are many reasons for this, including lowering tables, loss of artesian pressure, expense of drilling, expense of pumping, and increasing salinity. Scientists argue that new wells should be drilled sparingly, and water used wisely. They use terms like “practical sustained yield”—meaning you take out no more than is going in. They say an aquifer is like a bank account—if you must draw it down, the reason should be to build a return in the long run. They warn about unchecked exploitation, and talk about the end's coming as soon as 2025.

Their advice passes like wind. Saharans are no wiser than the rest of us. They dream of green. It is the color of Islam. In Algeria the fundamentalists have promised to make a garden of the desert. Words come easily.

Life in Tamanrasset

ALGERIANS CALL IT THE EXTREME SOUTH, WITH the same feeling that we put into our “Far West.” It is the land of more so: drier, fiercer, and wilder, a desert of parched basins and volcanic mountains, of buttes, cinder cones, and confused black rock. You can walk for hours absorbed by the drama of desolation and distance. The view is mesmerizing, like a night sky. The peaks give it depth; the nomads give it scale. It is the central Sahara, a long way to everywhere. Then you turn around and find Tamanrasset.

There are no date groves in Tamanrasset, and few trees. Perched nearly a mile high in the Hoggar Mountains, it is the boomtown of the Sahara. Northerners criticize it as an austere place, where Islam is practiced strictly, alcohol is forbidden, and Arab women, even veiled, rarely venture onto the streets. There is no telephone connection, no good road, and no decent postal service—

America needs a new fast and effective cleanup

AN ALARMING LACK OF PROGRESS IN CLEANUP.

When Congress enacted the Federal Superfund program in 1980, the goal was to quickly clean up America's most dangerous hazardous waste sites. Congress and many others assumed there would be only a relatively few such sites and that cleanup costs would be limited.

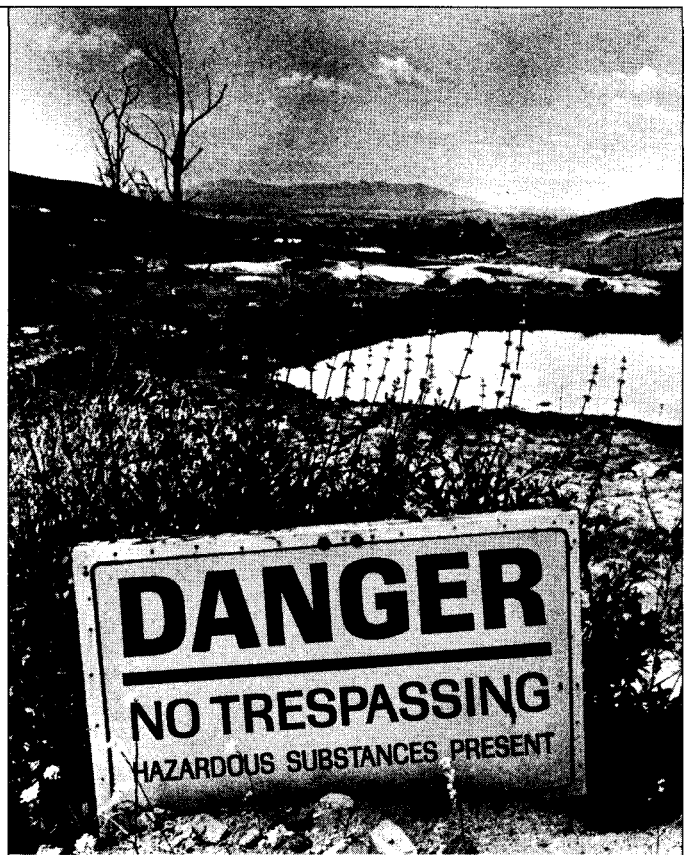
Now, after a decade of trying to make Superfund work, it's clear these assumptions were wrong and that a quick fix was never possible. What's wrong with Superfund and why has so little been accomplished?

The problem is twofold. First, the real scope of our nation's hazardous waste situation is far greater than Congress anticipated. With 1,200 priority sites already identified, growing numbers of sites are being found in every state. The Environmental Protection Agency expects that by the year 2000, there may be as many as 2,000 priority sites.

With rapidly rising cleanup costs, which now average about \$25 million per site, the eventual price tag is staggering. According to a top government agency, cleaning up all of America's hazardous waste sites could take from 30 to 60 years and cost up to \$500 billion!

A second problem is Superfund's alarming lack of progress in cleanup. A decade and billions of dollars later, fewer than 60 out of the 1,200 sites have actually been cleaned up.

Why? One major reason is Superfund's liability system. It requires that cleanup be paid for by establishing liability—who sent what waste, how much and where—and then negotiating or litigating with those believed to be responsible. While this sounds good in theory, it hasn't worked in practice. Instead, the result has been



delayed cleanup and enormous legal, consulting and other costs unrelated to cleanup.

COMPOUNDING THE PROBLEMS INSTEAD OF SOLVING THEM.

This is because working out who pays and how much for cleanup is very difficult. Under Superfund, anyone who simply used or owned the site at any time could be liable for the entire cleanup bill. Users can include major corporations, small businesses, local governments, hospitals, nursing homes, schools, even individuals. And it does not matter who caused the harm or whether they did anything wrong. Superfund's retroactive

A new system to achieve cleanup of our environment.

liability provision makes parties pay for past actions based on today's standards.

For example, at 422 sites almost 14,000 parties have been notified that they could be liable. In turn, many of them are identifying still others who contributed in some way to the presence of waste at each site. And since Superfund liability deals with past waste disposal, the record of users can go back 25, 30 or even 40 years and can number in the hundreds.

The result? The focus on cleanup has been lost as private and public parties spend years in difficult but unavoidable negotiations and litigation, trying to work out agreements that would provide funds for cleanup. At some sites, more money has been spent resolving complex factual issues than on cleanup itself. This does a lot for lawyers and consultants, but very little for the environment. And of course, these costs are eventually passed on to all of us as consumers in higher prices for goods and services. Isn't it time to stop this wasteful process and get on with cleaning up our environment?

At AIG, we think so. There is little to be gained by arguing over waste disposal that happened long ago. America needs a system that will promote fast and effective cleanup, reduce unnecessary legal fees, spread the cost of cleanup broadly, and encourage responsible waste management practices today.

A PROPOSED SOLUTION: THE NATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL TRUST FUND.

To accomplish this, we have proposed creating a National Environmental Trust Fund, similar to the National Highway Trust Fund. Its resources would be used exclusively for cleaning up old hazardous waste sites. Superfund's tough

liability provisions would still apply for future pollution, as would all other state and federal environmental laws designed to promote responsible waste management.

One way this fund could be financed would be by adding a separate fee to commercial and industrial insurance premiums in the United States. Even a modest assessment, say 2% of premiums and an equivalent amount for self-insureds, would provide about \$40 billion over the next decade - more than enough to clean up the 1,200 highest-priority sites. Without endless time and money spent on legal debates about liability.

A national advisory board consisting of private individuals, industry and public officials could be charged with overseeing the program. We also suggest giving consideration to establishing local technical monitoring committees in each community. These groups of local citizens, representatives of industry and others would work with the Environmental Protection Agency and their own state on the particular cleanup site - from the very beginning of the cleanup effort.

YOU CAN HELP.

We've waited long enough and spent enough money in the courtrooms. Now it's time for action. A cleaner America should be all Americans' shared goal and shared responsibility.

To express your views, or if you would like further information about AIG's proposed National Environmental Trust Fund, write to Mr. M.R. Greenberg, Chairman, American International Group, Inc., 70 Pine Street, New York, NY 10270.

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and financial services.

only a downlink for national television. Groundwater is so limited that new households are not allowed to hook up to the municipal system and old households are severely rationed. People live on deliveries from private water trucks that scavenge supplies from distant wells. Despite plans to pipe in water hundreds of miles from the south, no one expects the situation to improve. The town is growing too fast. Over the past decade its population has swollen to 45,000, mostly with northerners seeking their fortune on the frontier.

The reason is trade. Tamanrasset sits at the geographic heart of the desert. Linked to the north by 1,200 mostly paved miles of the Trans-Saharan Highway, it dominates a network of dirt tracks stretching into Mali, Niger, and Libya. The trading works by barter: Algerian food is transported from the north and exchanged for new and used consumer goods that come in from the uncontrolled economies to the south. It is a difficult business, and much of it is illegal. There are worries about border police and soldiers, breakdowns, banditry, and death by thirst. Nonetheless, plenty of people are willing to take the risk. In the Extreme South everything that moves comes through Tamanrasset.

The oldest building in town is a small adobe fort with crenellated walls which looks like a set piece out of a Foreign Legion movie. It was built by Charles de Foucauld, a French religious hermit who came here in 1905 to live among the fearsome Tuareg. At the time, Tamanrasset was an encampment of twenty straw huts. Foucauld, intending to found a monastery, chose it because of its isolation and poverty. He was a bit of a nut, and drew no followers. During the First World War various Saharan tribes revolted against the French, a faint echo of the European struggle. Foucauld took sides and began sending reports to the French colonial army. On the night of December 1, 1916, the rebels lured him out of his stronghold, bound him hand and foot, and shot him in the head.

After the war the French built a larger fort across the way, and Foucauld joined the French pantheon as a Catholic martyr in the cause of colonialism. The Foucauld myth still accounts for much of the tourism in Tamanrasset. This frustrates Algerians, who want the business but have an active memory.

Today the two forts are at the center of town and the main street passes between them. The street is crooked, shaded, and lined with adobe buildings stained ochre and set against a clear sky. Every evening, when the mountain air turns cool, people meet there to stroll and to talk in the sidewalk cafés. Arab and Berber businessmen make deals over sweet tea, pulling thick wads of cash from under their gowns. Black women in colorful print dresses balance baskets on their heads. Veiled Tuareg men ride by on camels. Barefaced Tuareg women lead their lovely daughters down the sidewalks. Uniformed soldiers stroll in twos and threes.

The style of the street is not completely spontaneous.

Some time ago a German architect was brought in on a five-year contract to spruce up the place. Citizens now criticize his work. Particularly galling to them is a garish administration building in mock-Saharan style, and a public square with cement columns that cast no shade. The centerpiece of the square, in this town without water, is a fountain. It has never been turned on, and is slowly filling with garbage. To protect Tamanrasset from such mistakes in the future, an architectural advisory committee has been formed. Its guiding light is a young man named Salah Addoun. Tall and energetic, he has close-cropped black hair, dark Berber skin, and a ready smile. At thirty-four, Addoun is one of the most admired men of Tamanrasset.

He was raised in the desert, not far from Adrar. After six years of university studies in structural engineering and architecture, he moved to Tamanrasset. Now, while waiting for the licenses that will allow him to open the town's first private architectural studio, he works for his uncle's construction firm. His office is a concrete cubicle off an equipment yard—a noisy, dusty, crumbling room lit by a single bulb that hangs from the ceiling. Addoun disdains luxury. He draws carefully on an inclined school desk, and is interrupted by questions from the yard crew. He builds houses for the middle class, shops for shopkeepers, and housing projects for the government. His designs are spacious, cool, and well adapted to the Saharan culture. There are separate quarters for men and women; he believes that the sexes must not be forced to mix. Addoun is a strict traditionalist.

He is also a fundamentalist Muslim, and has recently become more devout. Alienated by the corruption and incompetence of the political system, he has turned to the Koran for solutions. In fact, he believes that the Koran contains solutions to *all* the world's problems. Addoun is an intelligent and well-educated man. His absolute faith is hard for a Westerner to understand.

One day, while brewing tea in the mountains, we talked about fate. He said, "Two weeks ago my neighbor Boucenna went off with a driver down the Trans-Saharan toward In-Guezzam. Halfway there they broke down—it was the carburetor. The driver hitched a ride in a passing truck to fetch a part, and he left Boucenna to guard the car. After a few hours Boucenna decided to leave after all, and he set off on foot. He made it twenty kilometers before he died."

"He must have panicked," I said.

Addoun shook his head. "Boucenna was not a coward. And he was not stupid. But for every man there are two times that are inescapable—the time of birth and the time of death. These are not places but times. Boucenna walked because his time had come."

I said, "You mean death is everyone's destination."

"I mean there is a time, and it is predetermined."

We left it at that, unsatisfied. Even between friends some gaps are unbridgeable.

In this confrontation between civilizations the Saharans have an advantage: they know the West better than the West knows them. One window is France, the historical colonial master and current destination for emigrant workers. The other window is television, and it looks directly onto the United States. In Tamanrasset there are shows about cowboys, gangsters, suburbanites, teenagers. At a glance people can distinguish Los Angeles from New York, Texas from Florida. By observing us from the outside, they learn more than we might suspect.

Addoun and I spent an evening watching television in an open courtyard. A movie was showing, dubbed in French. A beautiful actress lay on the beach. I asked Addoun what he thought: was she a whore to exhibit herself?

He laughed at me. "Why, because of the bathing suit?"

"Your Islam will ban them."

"For our women, not for yours."

"What is the difference?"

"The difference, my dear friend, is purely cultural."

Later, perhaps to change the subject, he said, "You can tell an American movie by the cars."

I pointed to the screen. "That's a Volkswagen."

"It's how they *show* the cars—they advertise them. You wait, there'll be a car chase."

There was.

He said, "In French movies they advertise food. There's always a scene where they're eating dinner."

He thought for a while. "In Arab movies they show weddings."

Addoun has not yet married. He wants to start his business first, and build a proper house. His girlfriend lives elsewhere; she writes him regularly. He will not tell me her name. When he does take a wife, his friends may never meet her.

BY WESTERN STANDARDS WOMEN IN THE SAHARA DO not have easy lives. Once, in a northern oasis, I met a modern-looking man in a business suit who ran a movie theater that women were forbidden to enter. His name was Amar Hamim. That week he was showing a cheap Hollywood movie. I forgot the title and plot but

IT IS THE LAND OF MORE SO: DRIER,
FIERCER, AND WILDER, A DESERT OF
PARCHED BASINS AND VOLCANIC
MOUNTAINS, OF BUTTES, CINDER
CONES, AND CONFUSED BLACK ROCK.

remember some bare breasts and love scenes, a theater full of men, and an atmosphere thick with sexual tension.

This was in an oasis where the women who ventured onto the streets wrapped themselves in white shrouds and allowed only a single eye to show.

Hamim and I were walking together when we passed one of them. At first she seemed like just another shrouded figure—as anonymous and uninteresting as she was meant to be. But then we exchanged glances, she and I, and I discovered an eye of the most exquisite beauty—oval, almond colored, lightly made up, with long lashes. The eye was warm, lively, and inviting. I didn't need to see more.

I nudged Hamim and asked if he had noticed. He smiled and said, "But she's married—that's why she veils herself."

"And your wife, does she wear a veil?"

"Of course!" He was shocked that I had asked.

Later I pointed to an unveiled woman in a tailored suit. "Who is she?"

"A whore."

"You know her?"

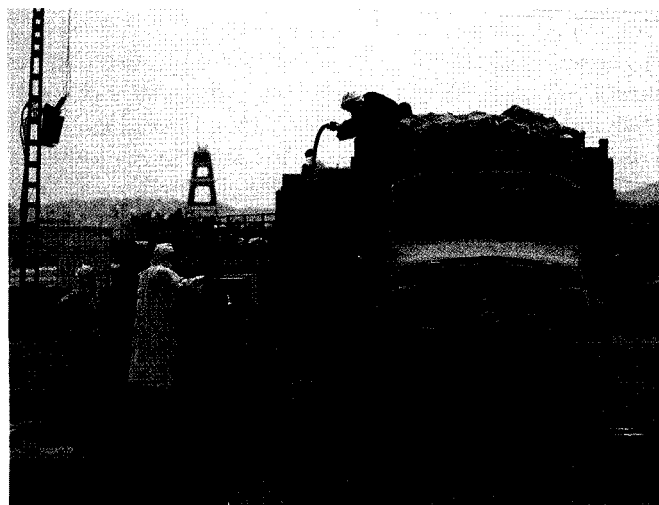
He shook his head.

"Maybe she works in an office." Women do, in the more liberal oases.

"She's a whore." He was emphatic.

It is difficult to understand how any woman could share this view, but many seem to. The Islamic revival, which advocates strict separation of the sexes, draws enthusiastic support from masses of young and educated women. Even in the cities they have returned voluntarily

to the veil. They cloister themselves, and encourage their husbands and brothers to join the movement. They believe that Islam represents the true emancipation of women, here on earth as well as in heaven. They argue that it is the West that enslaves, with its moral decay and sexual exploitation. No one knows if this is revolutionary zeal or a sustainable attitude. There are other women who oppose the fundamentalists—but quietly. They are trapped for now. Some Western observers believe that they will triumph in the end. They argue that sexual apartheid will prove to be the weak link in Islamic government.



LIBYAN TRUCKS REFUEL, TAMANRASSET

ADDOUN AND I WENT TO LUNCH AT THE HOUSE OF Moulay Lakhdar Abderhadim, one of the most successful businessmen of Tamanrasset. He lived in a wealthy district, out beyond the camel market. To the unaccustomed eye it was a dismal area. Chickens and goats picked through garbage in the rutted dirt streets. There were long, monotonous compound walls, crumbling and neglected, stained brown with mud and blowing dust. Only the vehicles hinted at money: black Peugeots, Range Rovers, and Land Cruisers, worth two to three times their price in the United States.

We knocked at a metal gate. After a delay, while the women scurried out of sight, we were let in by an old black man in a robe and turban. Addoun greeted him warmly and introduced him as a friend of the family, though clearly he was a servant. We entered a lush garden of fruit trees and flowering bushes. The house was sprawling, single-story, made of stone and adobe. Addoun knew his way, and led me into the sitting room, where Abderhadim reclined on a mattress watching a soccer game on television. Abderhadim is plump and soft, and has thinning hair. He wore a blue running suit zippered up tight around his throat. A blanket was draped over his legs; Abderhadim suffers from rheumatism, and it had flared up in his knees. Addoun and I sat on cushions on the floor. The doorway gave onto a courtyard, brilliant with desert light. Other men arrived. The servant came with a bowl of couscous, and sat with us.

Abderhadim said he was a trader in food, car parts, and other goods, as the opportunities arose. I asked him to explain. He said he was an importer by default. "Niger is very poor. But you can find everything there." I asked if it was difficult doing business across such distances, with no roads, no telephones, and nonconvertible currencies. He smiled and said, "We are all Muslims."

Another man, dressed in a white robe and turban, told a story to illustrate the social contract in the Sahara: His uncle was a trader in Tamanrasset who for years ran camel caravans to Niger and Mali, carrying dates and salt to the south, and returning with chickens. His name was Salem Ben Hadj Ahmed. In 1953, on the way to Agadez, Niger, he and his men came across the encampment of a nomadic family. The father and older sons had gone off hunting, leaving the mother and her youngest children. The woman made the caravaners welcome, gave them water, and prepared to slaughter a sheep in their honor. But Ahmed stopped her, since his men had killed a gazelle and had fresh meat. They ate the gazelle, and in the morning moved on. It was Ahmed's last trip; he was getting to be an old man. Afterward he stayed in Tamanrasset and sent out trucks to do his business. He died in 1968. News of his death spread by word of mouth through the desert. One day a letter arrived for his son. It was from Niger, and it said that his father had forty-five sheep there; he should come and get them. The son had never heard of these animals. He checked the will and found no men-

tion of them. However, he set out for Niger and eventually found the nomad whose wife had offered the sheep so many years before. The sheep was Ahmed's, the nomad said, and so were her offspring.

The nature of the trade has changed little since then. The destinations are the same, as is much of the cargo. If anything, Islamic values have grown stronger. Over tea Abderhadim got down to details. Some of the commerce is legal. Dates from the northern oases are exported; camels, goats, and chickens are imported. The exports exceed the imports, and so over the course of a year the merchants of Tamanrasset build credit in the neighboring countries. Then, most springs, a fair is held in the town during which the government relaxes import restrictions. Consumer goods, mostly Japanese, flood across the borders. The fair is an exception to the regulated Algerian economy—a sanctioned experiment in free trade. In Tamanrasset the balance sheets are returned to zero, and the goods are sold to buyers from the north.

But the real profits are in smuggling. Abderhadim admitted it reluctantly, and only because others were in the room. After pointing out that he himself never broke the law, he explained how it is done. The driver who carries a load of declared Malian goats into Algeria might on the next trip south head out with an outlawed cargo of Algerian wheat bought at subsidized prices. The truck that hauls Algerian dates down the Trans-Saharan to Niger might return by a less public route with a load of precious car parts.

"Electronics are the best," one of the guests said. "They are small and light and easy to hide, and they don't spoil in the heat."

And you can mark them up 1,000 percent.

The government has fought back with expanded patrols and stiff prison terms. It has declared a nationwide war on contraband, and is filling the jails with small-time bunglers. People in Tamanrasset are not concerned. The Sahara is a big place, and practically unpoliceable.

Before leaving, I mentioned the fundamentalists. They claim to be economic liberals. What if they take power? Might they not do away with the import restrictions? And wouldn't this undercut business? Abderhadim urged me not to worry. His logic went like this:

A free-market economy, though of course desirable, is only a remote possibility.

The Islamic fundamentalists are moralistic, which is of course also desirable. They might find new reasons to ban consumer goods.

Thanks be to Allah, business prospects in Tamanrasset remain excellent.

IN THE TOWN'S POOREST NEIGHBORHOODS THE HOUSES are small and dilapidated but still private. Travel-weary Land Rovers list through the streets. An old man ushers a donkey and cart out of a passageway. Veiled women duck out of sight when a stranger approaches.

Despite the obvious poverty, there is no sense of overcrowding or misery. The children playing in the dirt seem bright, well nourished, happy. There is no denying the successes of Algerian socialism: literacy among the young is almost universal; medical care is free; in a country where under the French people sometimes ate locusts to stay alive, no one goes hungry. As the socialist system disintegrates, it is being replaced by other forms of welfare, including the extended family, money sent home from Europe, and the Islamic requirement to give to the poor. Money as well as power is being concentrated in the hands of the imams.

Misery in Tamanrasset is reserved for the desert outskirts, where refugees from Mali and Niger suffer hunger and disease. Most are illegal immigrants. They live in shacks and donated Red Cross tents. The smallest children go naked, and the older ones dress in rags. Flies infest their eyes. There are no medical clinics, no schools, and only a few wells. The men look for day work, the women take in laundry, and the young boys go downtown to beg and to hawk cigarettes. They cause trouble and commit crimes, for which they are resented. The parallels to Algerians in France are ironic and unavoidable.

The neglect is intentional. Two years ago the chief of police told me, "The drought is over. It's time they left." Since then many of the refugees have been deported, but the next drought has hit, and others have replaced them.

It is a sign of the desperation farther south that people keep coming.

ADDOUN DOES NOT LIKE THE FRENCH. THEY IMPRISONED his father during the war of independence, and killed perhaps a million others. The memories are fresh. And there are more recent reasons. As an army officer, Addoun went to visit friends in Paris and Marseilles. I have seen pictures of him on the trip, standing erect in jacket and tie, looking like a movie version of a sophisticated Arab. He describes staying on Isle St.

Louis in an elegant townhouse with linen napkins, fawning servants, and an immaculate bathroom. The luxury offended his spartan tastes. He fled south on the train, and suffered the hostility of his fellow passengers. On the Côte d'Azur he was thrown out of a café for being Algerian. Now in Tamanrasset he endures the French tourists.

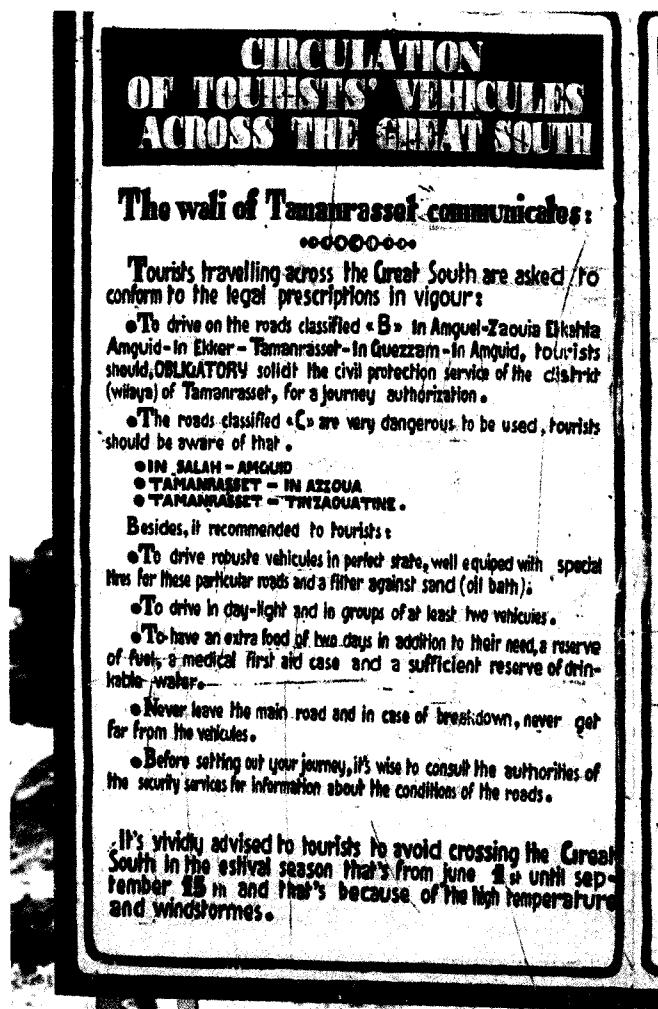
Other tourists include Germans, Swiss, Italians, and sometimes Japanese. There are not as many now as before; the political troubles keep them away. But you see them wandering the streets in cautious groups. Most

come in by plane and stay a few days on a package tour. They buy gifts, ride camels through the outlying hills, and are taken in four-wheel-drive caravans into the Hoggar Mountains, where they visit the Christian hermitage founded by Charles de Foucauld in 1910. The hermitage, staffed by monks, consists of five stone huts atop the 8,950-foot Assekrem Plateau, a windswept high point sixty miles from Tamanrasset. The view is desolate and unending. For a few dollars you can spend the night in a stone dormitory.

A different breed altogether are the Europeans who come to Tamanrasset on the Trans-Saharan. For them the town is just a way station on the long trip across the desert. The ones remembered are the lone eccentrics, the walkers, wanderers, bicycle riders, and lost souls. One man came through pushing a wheelbarrow. He was

Swiss, and he pushed his wheelbarrow through much of Africa.

Most of the motorists—the ones you see daily on the main street—are more conventional. They travel in groups of four-wheel-drive trucks, usually to Dakar or Abidjan or some other famous place with a beach. The trucks are equipped with colorful decals, with placards proclaiming EXPEDITION, and with gas cans, tires, shovels, and steel tracks for the sand. The drivers are dashing and self-conscious, mostly Germans and French playing the explorer. They wear bandannas around their necks



ON THE WAY OUT OF TOWN

and swagger through the hotel, smelling of sweat and dust, talking loud. Addoun calls them "chichi." They seem to have seen too many cigarette ads.

Then there are those who pass through in two-wheel-drive luxury sedans, especially Mercedes. The cars are to be sold in Niger, or Nigeria, or points beyond. A Mercedes Benz is the ultimate earthly good in Africa, and the class of traders, politicians, and smugglers that floats on top has earned a new name—the Wabenzi. Many of these cars on the Trans-Saharan are said to be stolen, provided with papers to satisfy the Algerian police. They are driven by experienced drivers. I talked to one Frenchman who had made the trip fifteen times before. He was barrel-chested and balding, with a drooping moustache and muscular arms—a tough guy right off the docks of Marseilles. I asked if he worried about losing his way. No, never, he said. He did this for a living. I didn't ask what he had done before. He took me to see the BMW he was ferrying south. Under the dust and mud it was gleaming black and very new. It had a digital radio and a burglar alarm. I asked him if he ever had trouble. No, never.

There are others for whom driving a car, stolen or not, is a one-time adventure. Most are young, middle-class, and studiously carefree. They are thin, bearded Germans and tangle-haired Frenchwomen. In Africa they have rejected the constraints of European society. They wear Ali Baba pants and sandals, and have the kind of self-congratulatory conversations you hear between cruising yachtsmen in warm waters. These are the people who get lost. It happens most often after they leave Tamanrasset, somewhere on the way to the border of Niger or in the hundreds of miles of wilderness that lie beyond. It is fierce country. Every month it gives up the bodies of the naive and the reckless.

Recently four young Germans—three men and a woman—left Tamanrasset in a Mercedes. They drove south to within sixty miles of Niger and then turned east, probably to avoid the border police. They got lost. They wandered 400 miles to the Libyan border, turned around, wandered back, and ran out of gas. Their families came to Tamanrasset to search for them. They distributed copies of a poster with photographs. Absurdly, the poster was written in German. In bold print it read, LOST IN WEST AFRICA! Weeks later the Mercedes and three male corpses were found. The woman was presumed buried by blowing sand.

I saw the poster tacked to a wall at La Source, a hostel built around a spring of bubbling mineral water three miles outside town. I was there for tea with Addoun and his friends. The poster was in the entranceway, and the photographs had been slashed with a knife. When I remarked on this to my companions, they seemed unsympathetic.

"They're dead anyhow," one said, as if that explained the slashes.

"They brought it on themselves," said another.

Addoun was more expansive. "The families blamed us for not finding them alive—but how could we have? Just look at the emptiness here."

Driving in the Sahara

THE DANGERS OF DRIVING IN THE SAHARA ARE not limited to foreigners. Anyone can break down. Anyone can get lost. Salah Addoun has at various times said to me:

"When you break down, you have to be calm, because the desert is calm."

"When you get lost, you should sit. Wait. One hour, two hours, a full day. Sit. You will find your orientation."

"Tourists panic and drive aimlessly. They are afraid of the lion before the lion."

"As you believe in life, you must also believe in death."

In a northern oasis I met a retired truck driver, a lively old man named Lag Lag who had nearly perished in the desert in 1957. Lag Lag and an assistant were driving a diesel rig through trackless sand when they lost their way; after several days of wandering they ran out of fuel. They carried water, and so they were in no immediate danger. But the long-term prospects were not good. Walking out was impossible, and it was unlikely that anyone would come their way. The sun forced them into the shade under the truck, where they dug a shallow trench. Day after day they lay there, watching their water dwindle and waiting for Allah's will. They turned inward to Islam, and talked about death and afterlife. Though they had a small supply of food, they abstained from eating, fearing that it would magnify their thirst. Dehydration, not starvation, is what kills in the desert. And thirst is among the most terrible of all human sufferings.

The physiologists who specialize in thirst seem never to have experienced it. This surprises me. You would think that someone interested in thirst would want to stop drinking for a while. It is easy to arrange, and can be done safely. But the physiologists pursue knowledge, not experience. They use words based in Greek, which soften the subject. For instance, they would describe the Sahara—the burning sand, the fierce, relentless sky—as *dipsogenic*, meaning "thirst-provoking." In discussing Lag Lag's case, they might say he progressed from *eudipsia*, meaning "ordinary thirst," through bouts of *hyperdipsia*, meaning "temporary intense thirst," to *polydipsia*, by which they mean "sustained, excessive thirst." We can define it more precisely: since *poly* means "many," *polydipsia* means "the kind of thirst that drives you to drink anything." There are specialized terms for such behavior, including *uriposia*, "the drinking of urine," and *hemoposia*, "the drinking of blood." For word enthusiasts, this is heady stuff. Nonetheless, the lexicon has not kept up with technology. Blame the ancients for not driving cars.



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I have tried, and cannot coin a suitable word for "the drinking of radiator coolant."

This is what Lag Lag and his assistant started drinking. They had been under the truck for several weeks. They wrote good-bye letters to their families and stuck them up in the cab. The assistant cried. Lag Lag was annoyed and said, "When you die, you die." He was a good Muslim. He lay calm.

Finally, the two of them having drunk most of the coolant, Lag Lag had an inspiration. He drained oil from the engine and poured it into the fuel tank. The assistant had given up hope, and wanted no part in the experiment. Lag Lag figured the oil would combine with the dregs of diesel fuel, and the mixture might ignite. He climbed into the cab, cycled the glow plug, and pressed the starter. The engine turned over and rumbled to life. The astonished assistant scrambled aboard. Spewing dense blue smoke, the truck rolled forward. After some miles they came to a track. With no idea where they were, or where the track led, they followed it. Allah was with them. A refrigerated van appeared, with water, meats, and vegetables. It was driven by a friend. They broke the seal on the back, built a fire, drank, and feasted. As the specialists say, they rehydrated.

DRIVING IN THE NORTH IS NO LONGER SO DANGEROUS. A network of hard-surfaced roads branches out from the Trans-Saharan, linking the oases. The roads are narrow and sometimes interrupted by drifting sand, but well maintained. Although the distances are great, help is never far away. There are cargo trucks, passenger buses, army convoys, occasional private cars, and swarms of yellow taxicabs. These taxis, mostly beat-up Peugeot station wagons, shuttle from one oasis to the next. Airline managers must dream of such schedules: the taxis never leave with less than a full load, and they arrive when they please. In that sense they are like the bush taxis of black Africa, but they are less crowded (only six passengers) and better driven. They are also better driven than the cabs of New York, and much

cheaper. For the price of a trip from Grand Central to La Guardia, you can travel a full day in the Sahara. The desert undulates under a brilliant sky. You pass a ruined fortress, a stand of palms, a camel wandering untethered, a dry riverbed filled with refracted sunlight, shimmering like water. There is no dispatch radio. Instead, a tape deck plays melodic readings of the Koran.

The south is different. There are few roads and few taxis. You drive most of the time over open desert, following tracks that are braided, eroded, obscured by dirt and sand. The braiding occurs when one driver gets

stuck and others detour around the signs of trouble, making new tracks. Still others follow, mire down in turn, and pick new ways through. The Oregon Trail used to braid the same way. In the Sahara every truck, every car, every motorcycle leaves its trace. This repeats itself over the years until a route consists of a band maybe twenty miles wide of crisscrossing tire marks. Intersecting routes lead off to unknown destinations.

Seen from the air, the tracks might make sense; on the ground they become hopelessly confusing. People follow them in circles. There is no one to ask directions from, and no one to help you if you break down. South of Tamanrasset heavy traffic on the Trans-Saharan means two trucks passing ten miles apart, on opposite ends of a basin.

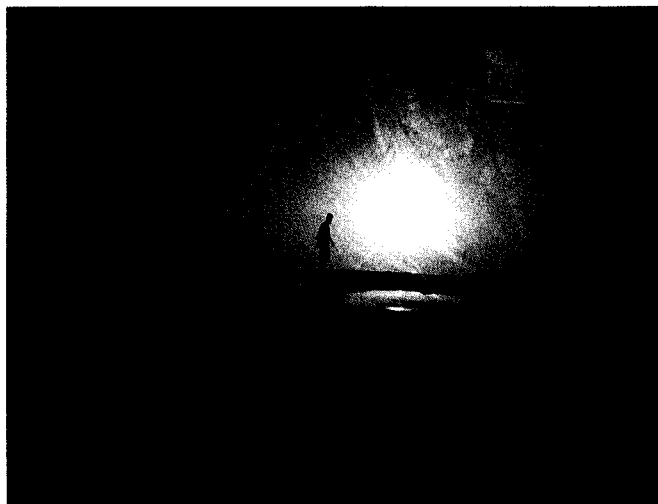
This is a subject close to Salah Addoun. His father was lost in the desert while driving with friends. It was 1962, the year of Algerian independence. Addoun's father wrote farewells on his *chèche*. He survived a month and was the last to die. The next day his body was discovered. Addoun was six.

Years later Addoun set out on a trip at sunset, to avoid the heat of day. After a full night of driving he came to some lights—and found himself back where he had started. As he says, Allah did not choose his death then. More

recently he was a passenger in a desert taxi across the sands southwestward from al Golea to a village called al Homr. After a while one of the passengers said to the driver, "Where are you going?"

"To al Homr."

The passenger said, "No, al Homr is toward



AT SUNSET, SCOUTING THE WAY

SEEN FROM THE AIR, THE BRAIDED
TRACKS MIGHT MAKE SENSE; ON THE
GROUND THEY BECOME HOPELESSLY
CONFUSING. PEOPLE FOLLOW
THEM IN CIRCLES.

that star there." He pointed to the left. The driver was unsure. The passenger took the wheel and followed the star to safety.

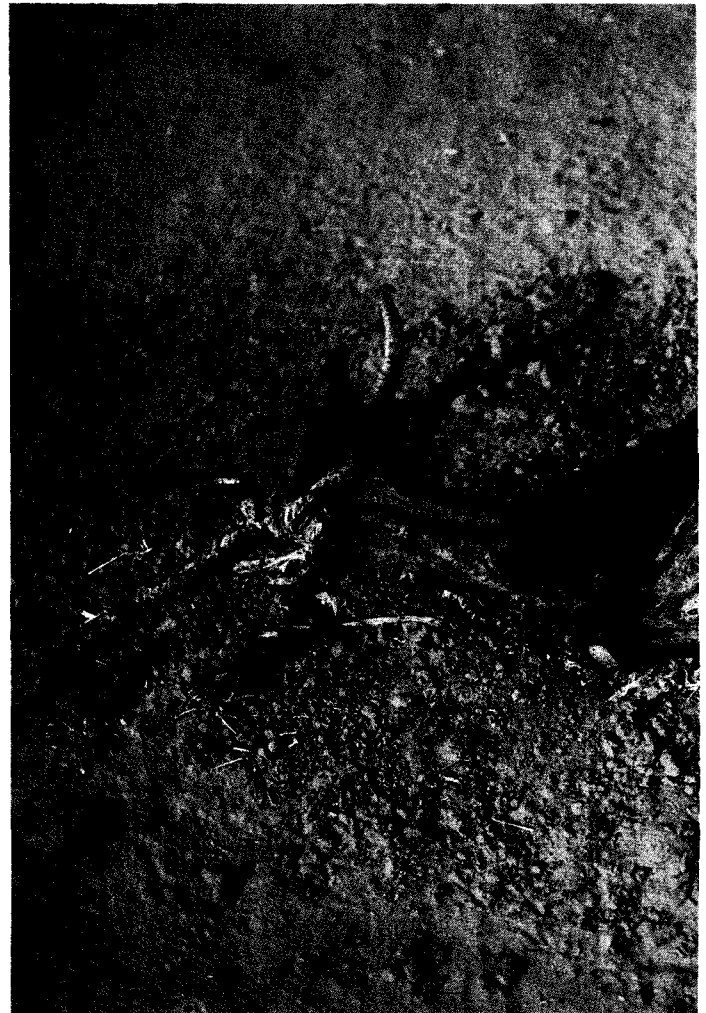
These are the skills of the nomad, and they require an encyclopedic knowledge of the land. One old man explained navigation this way: "Yes, by the stars at night. In daylight by local knowledge of the desert—this soil, this tree, this ruin, these tracks, these shadows before sunset. It is passed down from father to son, and spoken of among friends." He said "local," but we were discussing the smugglers who drive hundreds of miles across the open desert.

Concerned about the number of drivers lost in the south, the Algerian government has marked the main routes with metal pylons every ten kilometers. Ten kilometers is 6.21 miles, and drivers still get lost. For marking the Trans-Saharan south of Tamanrasset, the authorities decided on something more visible. This is the stretch that causes the most trouble. For 280 miles the route descends across infernal badlands to the border with Niger. There are no wells and few landmarks. Drivers take days to negotiate it. The solution was to be 451 white concrete markers, one every kilometer. A kilometer is 0.621 miles, an easy distance for seeing from one marker to the next. Addoun's company won the contract. It was springtime. He set off from Tamanrasset on foot, followed by a three-man crew in a Land Cruiser carrying supplies and topographic charts. Over two weeks he walked the entire distance, surveying thirty kilometers a day and driving stakes at the prescribed intervals. He did this as casually as you or I might go for a weekend stroll—no photographers, no expedition flags. Once the stakes were in place, he returned to Tamanrasset, gathered a larger crew, and set off with trucks carrying steel molds. Pouring the concrete took an additional three months. Thinking of his father, I asked if the walking had been a pilgrimage of sorts. He smiled and said he had needed the exercise. I asked if his markers would make the driving easy. He said no, he was not a dreamer. Smugglers and adventurers would still get lost. People would still take shortcuts, break down, or get stuck. And the tracks would still braid.

I CAUGHT A RIDE ON ONE OF A PAIR OF BATTERED trucks exporting dates down the Trans-Saharan to Agadez, Niger. It was the only public transportation available heading south. Addoun saw me off. He introduced me to the chief driver, a bearded man with quick, amused expressions, whose name was Ali. He wore stained trousers, a ragged shirt, and no shoes. Addoun had told me that Ali was the best: he practically lived in the desert. He was a trader as well as a driver; the trucks and the cargoes belonged to him. The dates were low-quality export varieties in burlap sacks. I asked Ali what he would return with from Niger. He said chickens.

The other driver was a gaunt, silent Tuareg, who

spoke no French and little Arabic. I was assigned to his truck. Addoun gave me a *chèche* against the sun and dust, a blanket for the nights, and a sack of oranges to share with my fellow passengers. On my truck there were ten of them—Tuaregs and black Africans, immigrant workers heading home. They peered down at me from atop the cargo. I threw my duffle on board and climbed up to join them. Each driver had an assistant, and started rolling without him. The assistants pretended not to notice. At the last possible moment they swung into the cabs. It was late afternoon.



AN AGENT OF DESERTIFICATION AND A VIC

By sundown we had settled into a rhythm. The trucks were like great beasts, guided lovingly across treacherous terrain. We wallowed and rolled, hesitated, backed, and shuddered. The gears ground. On high-speed level ground the engines bellowed and the tires heaved dust, and we hit twenty miles an hour. It was not to be a fast trip.

The darkness closed around us, and we probed it cautiously with yellow headlights. The trucks competed for the lead. Now we were ahead, watching our dust swirl around Ali's lights; now we were behind, tasting his dirt,

following his single red taillight. We made camp late, drank from fifty-gallon drums lashed to the chassis, and built two miserly fires. Campfires in the Sahara are fed by twigs and refuse, and are sparing of fuel. I have seen entire meals cooked on a few scraps of cardboard. Tonight we baked unleavened bread in the sand below the fires. After scraping the loaves clean we shredded them into goat stew, and ate from communal bowls. The air turned cool. I walked away and rolled myself into a blanket under brilliant stars. The desert was silent.

Hours later a truck passed. I heard its engine clearly,



DESERTIFICATION, KIFFA, MAURITANIA

and after a while saw its lights creeping through the distance. It crested a rise maybe five miles away and disappeared. Someone was pushing hard for the border, giving dimension to the night.

We left before dawn, and the next day passed through a land of torn hills, where sand lay in pockets too deep to escape. This was why passengers were taken along: the trucks bogged down often. You could sense the trouble coming on: the double-clutching of uncooperative gears, the desperate shifting-down, the shuddering loss of momentum, the halt, the surrender. We dug ourselves out

with hands, shovels, and sand ladders. The sand ladders were ten-foot segments of portable runways from the Second World War—perforated metal strips, designed to link together and support the weight of an airplane. Now they supported the export of dates. Each truck carried a pair. I sometimes had the feeling we were digging our way across the Sahara. Other people had not succeeded; we passed the rusted hulks of their cars, partly buried in the sand. I saw an old Volvo, a Lada, Renaults, Peugeots, Volkswagen buses, and a Fiat clustered around the worst spots.

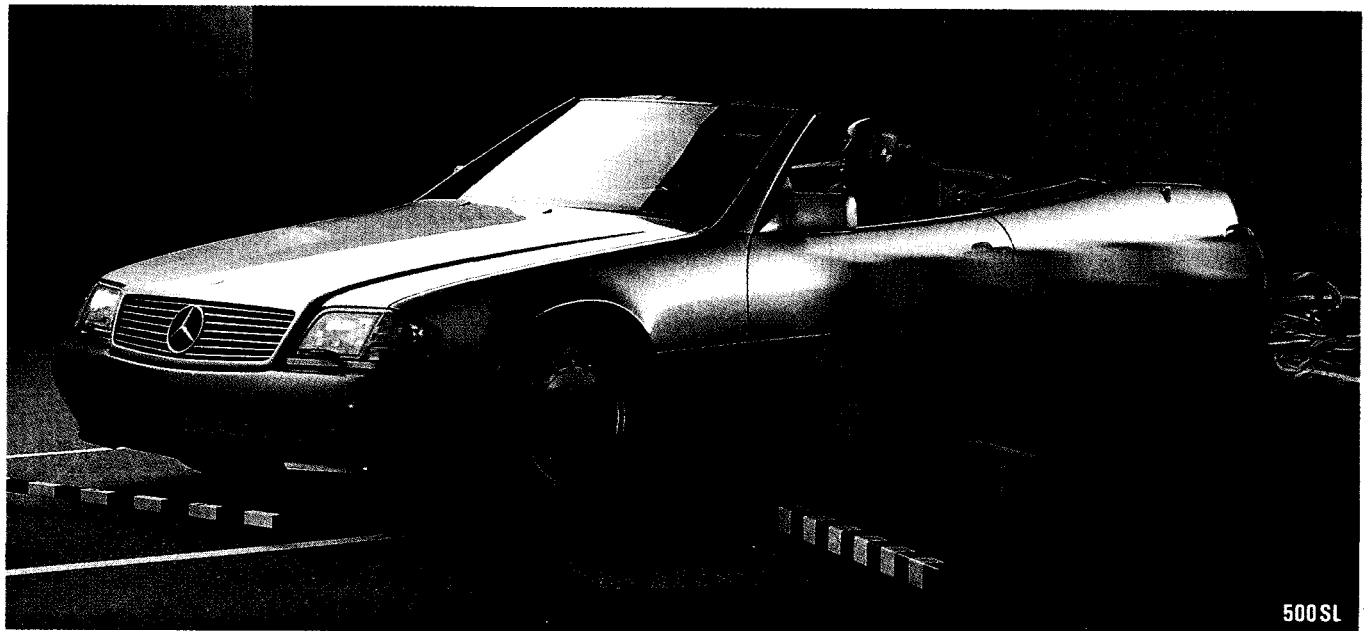
In the late afternoon nomadic children materialized from the empty desert. They ran toward us in a flock, waving plastic bottles to be filled. We stopped and gave them water. They had copper skin, ragged robes, and hair in wild dreadlocks. They begged for sugar, but we had none. I finally spotted their camp at the base of a hill—two tents, some goats, a camel, a woman watching. The children waited for us to leave. They stood looking up, shielding their eyes from the sun. Then they trudged off, lugging the heavy water bottles. They lived this way, off the traffic of the Trans-Saharan. It has become a moving oasis.

That night I mentioned to Ali that I had seen only one of Addoun's markers. Ali answered, "It's better to find your own way." I asked when we would get to the border. He was amused by the question. "Maybe not tomorrow," he said.

Maybe not ever, I thought the following afternoon. Against all reason, the trucks had been driving in loose formation, miles apart, as if to demonstrate that maddening disinclination to prudence that one encounters so frequently in the Third World. I was angered but not surprised when we lost sight of each other. After an hour in a maze of trackless basins, I began to worry. So, apparently, did our driver. He parked, killed the engine, and without a word marched off to a nearby hill, where he stood looking. I followed him. In all directions the land was empty. I left him there and returned to the truck. My concern was not Ali but the ignorance of our driver. I sat and waited. The desert was calm. I had hours to consider the worst. Somewhere out here, perhaps not far away, the Belgians had been lost.

They were husband, wife, and five-year-old boy, driving a Peugeot sedan for resale in Burkina Faso. At first their trip went fast, from Algiers through the northern oases to points south. Eventually the pavement ended. They were prepared to spend nights in the desert, but the driving was slower than expected. They were encouraged when they made Tamanrasset. After resting there they pushed on, planning on three days to the border.

When they got lost, they still had plenty of gas, and they set out to retrace their route. This was not easy, because the ground was hard-packed and rocky. They grew even more confused. But getting lost was part of the adventure, a special game for carefree Europeans. We know



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this because the woman later wrote it down. People dying of thirst in the desert often leave a written record. They have time to think. Writing denies the isolation.

The car broke down. They rationed their water and lay in the shade of a tarpaulin. The rationing did not extend their lives. They might as well have drunk their fill, since the human body loses water at a constant rate even when dehydrated. The only way to stretch your life in the desert is to reduce your water needs: stay put, stay shaded, and keep your clothes on.

The Belgians hoped a truck would pass. For a week they waited, scanning the horizon for a dust-tail or the glint of a windshield. The woman wrote more frantically. Their water ran low, then dry. They grew horribly thirsty. After filtering it through a cloth, they drank the radiator coolant.

Water is the largest component of our bodies, but we have little to spare. In the hottest desert we can lose it (mostly by sweating) at the rate of two gallons a day while resting in the shade, or four gallons a day walking. Because sweating keeps us cool, we function well in extreme heat as long as we have plenty of water. We need a lot of water—say, half again as much as a camel over the course of a year. The rule is to drink until your thirst is gone and then drink a little more. If water is available, you naturally maintain your fluid content within a range of a quarter of a percent. If water is not available, juice, Coke, or beer is just as good. Apparently, radiator coolant also works. But what happens when it all runs out? Inevitably this becomes the question for anyone stranded in the Sahara. I can only list the symptoms.

Thirst is first felt when the body has lost about 0.5 percent of its weight to dehydration. For a 180-pound man that amounts to about a pint. With a two percent loss (say, two quarts) the stomach is no longer big enough to hold as much as the body needs, and people stop drinking before they have replenished their loss, even if they are given ample water. This is called voluntary dehydration, though it is not a conscious choice. Up to a five percent loss (about one gallon) the symptoms include fatigue, loss of appetite, flushed skin, irritability, increased pulse rate, and mild fever. Beyond that lie dizziness, headache, labored breathing, absence of salivation, circulatory problems, blue skin, and slurred speech. At 10 percent a person can no longer walk. The point of no return is around 12 percent (about three gallons), when the tongue swells, the mouth loses all sensation, and swallowing becomes impossible. A person this dehydrated cannot recover without medical assistance. In the Sahara it may take only half a day to get to this stage. Now the skin shrinks against the bones and cracks, the eyes sink, and vision and hearing become dim. Urine is dark and urination is painful. Delirium sets in. In a hot desert climate, as the body dehydrates, a disproportionate amount of water is drawn from the circulating blood. The blood thickens and finally can no longer fulfill its functions, one

of which is to transport heat generated within the body to the surface. It is this heat that ultimately kills. The end comes with an explosive rise in body temperature, convulsions, and blissful death.

After the radiator coolant was gone, the Belgians started sipping gasoline. You would too. Call it *petroposia*: Saharans have recommended it to me as a way of staying off battery acid. The woman wrote that it seemed to help. They drank their urine. She reported that it was difficult at first, but that afterward it wasn't so bad.

The boy was the weakest, and was suffering terribly. In desperation they burned their car, hoping someone would see the smoke. No one did. They killed their son to stop his pain. Later the husband cut himself and the wife drank his blood. At his request she somehow broke his neck with a rock. Alone, she no longer wanted to live. Still, the Sahara was fabulous, she wrote, and she was glad to have come. She would do it again. She regretted only one thing—that she had not seen Sylvester Stallone in *Rambo III*. Those were her last lines. The family's remains were found later, and returned to Tamanrasset.

IT, WAIT, YOU WILL FIND YOUR ORIENTATION. ALI drove up after several hours. He had been behind us, stuck in deep sand over his wheels; we had not been lost at all. We headed south again, and arrived at the border late in the night, at the village of In-Guezzam.

To find In-Guezzam, go to the end of the earth and keep driving. It sits on a hot plain, a sad settlement of adobe and concrete—a customs outpost and police station, a café, a gas station, a dirt runway, and a few houses. We spent the morning at the Algerian exit post, filling in forms and answering questions from hostile policemen. When they released us, we drove off into the braided no-man's-land that separates the two countries. These no-man's-lands exist everywhere in the Sahara, presumably because the countries are too hostile to put their posts back to back.

After fifteen miles we came to the border station at Assamakka, Niger. A line of fifty-gallon drums stood in the dirt, a roadblock without a road. On the other side was a settlement of shacks, a tree, and a barracks. The soldiers were black-skinned southerners. One wore an Australian bush hat and carried a Bowie knife. Another wore twin pearl-handled revolvers. A third fingered an automatic rifle. I wondered what they had done to be banished to the remote north of their country. They seemed discouraged by fate, and resentful at being waked from their midday dreams. After taking our passports they ordered us to unload the trucks, every sack. Then they went back to sleep. Children emerged from the shacks, hawking cigarettes, soft drinks, and chickens. Two Ethiopians approached me for help. They had been deported by Algeria and refused entry by Niger. For weeks they had been stuck between the countries, living on donations from passing strangers. They were hungry

and sick. I gave them my blanket and my last oranges. They handed me a crudely written letter to the United Nations High Commissioner on Refugees. I promised to pass it on when I got to the capital, and I did.

The guards returned to probe the sacks for hidden weapons, which they said were being smuggled to the rebellious Tuareg. Ali remarked, "Why would we come through this checkpoint? It is a big desert." He seemed amused, and infinitely patient. The guards pawed through our luggage, confiscating the small stuff—pens, batteries, and rolls of film. They did not ask directly for money. After another day they seem to have realized that Ali would outwait them. They stamped our passports and let us go.

IN ARLIT, 150 MILES TO THE SOUTHEAST, YOU HAVE made the crossing and have arrived suddenly in black Africa. Arlit, in Niger, is a uranium town. The streets are noisy and bustling, and travelers from the desert are greeted by energetic hustlers. The Sahara is all around, but now the road is paved. It leads south for another 150 miles, to the ancient caravan center of Agadez.

Agadez is a poor, mud-walled town, dominated by a sixteenth-century adobe mosque and its Sudanese-style minaret, rising ninety feet above the dusty streets. Once, the town sat on the southern fringe of the desert, and prospered on a booming trade in slaves, gold, and salt. Now the desert has moved farther south, and the town runs on a little commerce, a little charity, and a little international aid. There are wells here, and government offices. As a result, the population of Agadez has swollen with refugees from the droughts. The refugees remain even when the rains come. Their herds are dead, and they have nothing to return to.

From Agadez I took a bus 550 miles southwest to Niamey, the capital of Niger, and watched the desert disappear. It was a good, clean bus, with air-conditioning and a stereo. The driver sat upright and wore lightly tinted sunglasses. There was drama in the way he drove, flashing through villages, overtaking the cars ahead. He had a

**THE DROUGHT IN MAURITANIA
HAS DONE MORE THAN DAMAGE THE
SAVANNA; IT HAS DEEPEINED THE
DESERT ITSELF. DUNES HAVE BURIED
WHOLE VILLAGES.**



SHANTYTOWN GOAT MARKET, NOUAKCHOTT

multi-tone horn, and he could make it talk. Thanking, scolding, proclaiming, the Niamey bus was coming through.

At first the land was barren, a desert of gravel and gullies. Then acacias became more frequent. Three hours out of Agadez the country turned to rolling,

eroded grassland, inhabited in the valleys by isolated families. Later the grass turned thicker, and the country began to resemble American rangeland, with goats and long-haired cattle. There were villages of round huts and cultivated fields of hand-planted corn. Then we came to a reservoir, the first open water I had seen in thousands of miles. The wind pushed up little waves that lapped the shores. The shores were farmed. There were flooded trees. I delighted: water is life.

We stopped only for roadblocks and prayers. At the roadblocks illiterate soldiers peered at our identity papers and tried to record our names in ledgers. They asked me to help. At prayer time the passengers knelt together in the dirt, and the driver responded by playing a cassette of the Koran.

After dark we drove along the border with Nigeria, through frequent villages. There was no electricity and no moon, and the night was black. In the markets lining the road the vendors lighted their wares with kerosene lanterns. There were hundreds of them, casting flickering orange light on thousands of milling villagers. Everyone was outside, enjoying the evening. We stopped for dinner in the largest town, and I wandered in the crowds, listening to the constant calling. Sitting on a bench with others, I ate a

bowl of rice with a spicy sauce, impossible to see in the darkness.

In Niamey I went to the national museum to find the remnants of a famous tree. It was an acacia, and it had grown in the Ténéré, the great sand desert east of Agadez. For hundreds of miles in any direction it was the only tree. Maps showed it. Then, in 1973, a Libyan truck driver collided with it and knocked it down. The trunk was hauled to the museum. Out in the Ténéré a simple metal statue was erected. Someday I will go to see it, a most peculiar monument to driving in the desert.

Desertification in Mauritania

SOME 400 MILES TO THE WEST OF NIGER, BEYOND Mali, lies Mauritania. I flew to Nouakchott, its capital, which is accessible in virtually no other way. There are no tourists in Mauritania. It is one of the world's most wretched countries. Malnutrition and disease are endemic, and in bad years there is famine. There are few roads, schools, or hospitals. Politics is driven by poverty, fear, and racial division. The military rules repressively. The towns are in disarray. For all this the Sahara can be blamed. The desert is expanding rapidly and has overwhelmed the country.

Mauritania was given life by the French in 1960, as a desert nation to be ruled by desert nomads but to include a fertile strip of savanna and riverland along the southern border. In thirty years much has changed. By leaps and bounds the savanna is turning to sand. The drought has done more than damage the savanna; it has deepened the desert itself. Dunes have buried whole villages.

In theory there are solutions. You can drill wells, irrigate crops, stabilize dunes, and plant trees. You can teach people to use the land more carefully, not to overgraze, overcut, or overpopulate. You can balance indigenous and imported technologies. You can preach hope that agriculture in the south might someday feed the country's two million people.

In fact there is little reason for optimism. Only rain can threaten the desert, and in recent years there has been mostly drought. The power of weather dwarfs human effort. In the past decades the pluviometric threshold of six inches of annual rainfall—the minimum for grazing—has moved south sixty miles. Nouakchott, once surrounded by grasslands, is now swept by blowing sand.

The Sahara is mercurial, and does not attack in regimental formation. It sprouts in barren patches here and there, perhaps a hundred miles ahead of the absolute desert, and bypasses the greenbelts planted to block its advance. Greenbelts are trees, Maginot lines in a losing war against the climate. If they survive, they protect only themselves. Farther on, around a well, near a village, for miles outside a city, the land goes bad. People steepen the decline once it has begun. There are more of them than ever before, wielding better tools. But it is hard to blame them. They cannot wish themselves away, and they must eat. The land cannot support them. The rains have stopped. This is the process called desertification.

The flight gave me no preparation for the conditions in Mauritania. I sat comfortably in the airplane watching the sun set against the ocean horizon, drinking strong black coffee. A fog bank lay below us. To the east the Sahara stretched in graceful plains. I sampled a pastry. I wiped my hands with perfumed towelettes. Then we were on final approach over a coastal desert of sand and gravel. Shacks passed by the right wing. We landed, and disembarked by a ramshackle terminal. The dusk was

thick with heat, dirt, and humidity. Within minutes my shirt was soaked through.

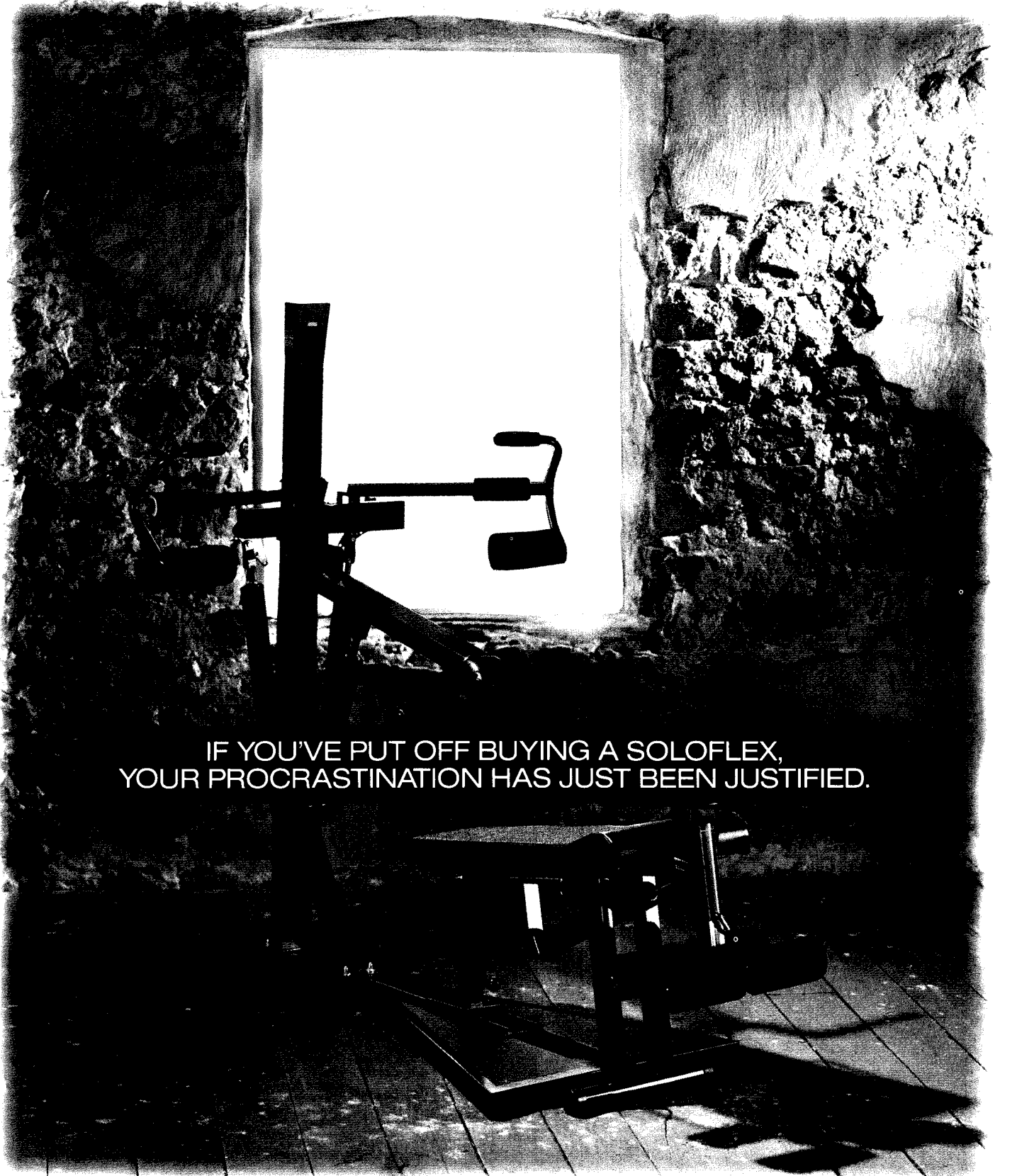
Mauritania is edged on the west by the sea, on the north by the Polisario rebellion of the Western Sahara, on the east by the roadless desert, and on the south by hostilities with Senegal. The Nouakchott airport is the gateway to the outside world, and the few flights are booked weeks in advance. With some regret I watched the airplane depart for Mali. The remaining daylight was gray and threatening. I did not like the looks of the soldiers who loitered on the ramp, eyeing the passengers. I stood in the crowd, fighting mosquitoes and flies. Ahead, the police were carefully checking identities, and bodily searching the men. I wondered what they hoped to find.

The other passengers were native Mauritians, returning from the hajj pilgrimage to Mecca. Most were Moors, members of a Berber subgroup who speak an Arabic dialect known as Hassaniya and who form the upper caste of Mauritanian society. The men wore traditional Saharan robes, while the women wore full dresses with colorful scarves, and went unveiled. Though many people undoubtedly spoke French, none would talk to me. They were reluctant to be seen with a foreigner.

Mauritanian society is closed and hierarchical. Below the ruling caste of Moors is a Haratin class of slaves and ex-slaves, known as Black Moors. Slavery was banned in 1980, but it continues today. That is less shocking than it might seem: free people die of starvation in Mauritania, and some slaves prefer their servitude. The third level of society, below the Haratins, is made up of farmers and pastoralists from the sub-Saharan south—black Africans with ties to Senegal and Mali, who have never been integrated into the desert society. They inhabit the savanna and the prime farmland along the Senegal River, and constitute perhaps half the population. The Africans are a problem for the ruling Moors, who despise and fear them and worry that they will rise in revolt. The Moors would like to reduce their numbers.

In April of 1989 riots broke out for three days, during which 400 of these "foreign" blacks were hunted down and slaughtered. Afterward Mauritania expelled as many as 170,000 of them, calling them Senegalese. Senegal responded in kind, and the two nations settled into the state of near-war that exists today. In Mauritania the persecution continues. Along the Senegal River the army is driving people from their land. There are rumors of killings. In the name of national security the area has been closed to outside observers.

OFFICIALLY IT IS CALLED THE ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF Mauritania. This is a cynical play on words, but one with relevance to the country. In Mauritania the military has assumed not only command of the government but also the trappings of Islamic purity. Islam there has become a tool of social control, wielded to en-



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force discipline. Shari'a, the severe Islamic code, was instituted in 1980, both to pre-empt the small fundamentalist movement and to reinforce the power of the ruling Moors. Since then the government's Islamic rhetoric has grown stronger, and for the same reasons. The African underclass, though devoutly Muslim, is not pleased. Arabism and Islam are closely linked. By declaring its religious credentials, the military has aligned itself with the Arab north, at the expense of the Africans. In Mauritania policy usually boils down to racial division. For now no one dares to object. The military knows what it is doing. As the Sahara squeezes the populations together, the choice is between Islamic discipline and ethnic disunity, between the military and all-out civil war. In Mauritania, Islam is martial law.

Nouakchott itself is a political creation, founded in 1957 as the capital of the soon-to-be nation. It is a dispersed, low-rise city of boulevards and block-house architecture—a place that speaks of the Mauritanian expanse. Goats wander the alleys. Donkeys haul loads of precious firewood to be sold in small bundles. The buildings are concrete, crumbling, dirty, and hot. There are few cars and fewer trucks. Scant downtown traffic lights regulate the flow of green Toyota vans packed to the limit with thirty or more passengers. The wind blows constantly, carrying the desert with it. Sand is everywhere. Slowly it is turning even the busiest streets into tracks. Inside the buildings workers sweep it, shovel it, and take it back outside.

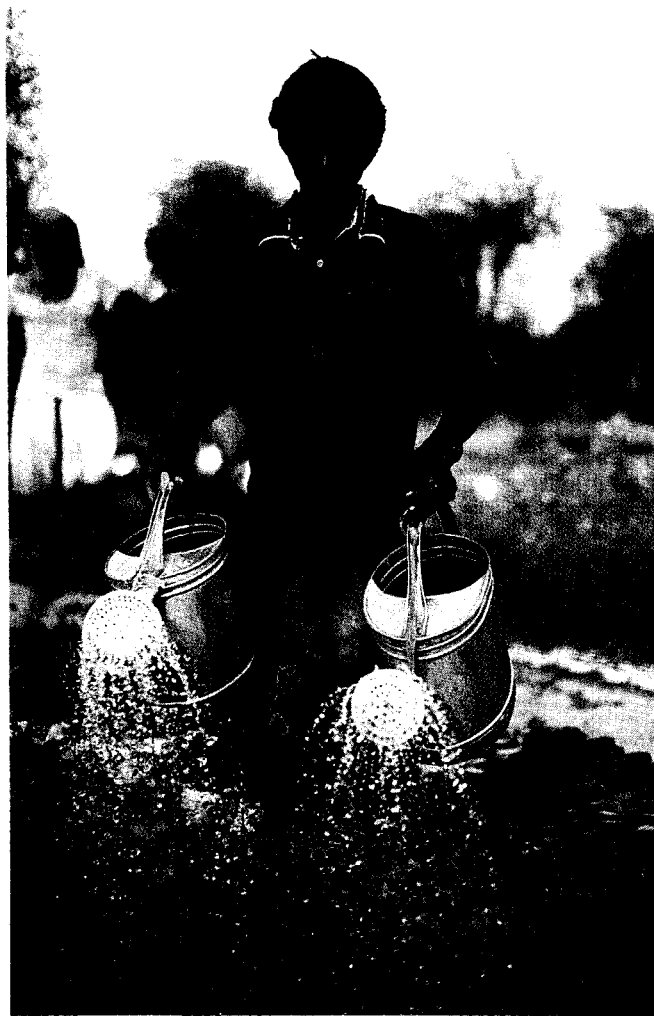
The most surprising fact about Nouakchott is its size. Downtown you might guess it at 100,000 inhabitants. The actual number is closer to 800,000—more than a third of the entire country's population. Most of the people are Moors. They live in squatters' camps that ring the city, and are discouraged from coming downtown by government policy and lack of transportation. Many are semi-nomadic: if the summer rains come, they leave with their goats for the open desert. When the season changes

and the land can no longer support them, they return to the capital, where there is electricity and water. The goats graze on refuse, at times on cardboard alone. The people have more elaborate needs. They suffer hunger and sickness, but in Nouakchott, at least, they manage to stay alive. Nouakchott is Mauritania's most efficient distribution center for foreign food and medicines.

I drove out to the squatters' camps with a Moorish businessman who explained his work as "sometimes import-export." We went to the animal market, in a sea of tents and flimsy shacks. Pencil-thin nomads crowded

around us. My host said, "They are not as miserable as they seem. They think that by living like this they can force the government to give them housing and land. It is mostly fakery." And these were his fellow Moors. I wondered what he thought of the black Africans.

We bought a struggling lamb at the market, forced it into the trunk, and drove home. The businessman lived in a two-story concrete house with a large parlor. It was too hot inside, so we sat out back on a rug in the sand, and drank Coke and traditional Saharan tea. Nearby a slave slaughtered and skinned the lamb. I write "slave" without being sure. He was a Haratin black with a peaceful face. He wore no chains. This is the modern form of slavery—a lifelong but willing servitude. I have seen it also in Tamanrasset. If I had asked, he would have been called a friend of the



A PEACE CORPS NURSERY, KIFFA

family. He was clearly more than a servant.

It was the week of the tree. On the television news we watched a government minister plant a sapling in the desert. There was no mention of world events. The businessman sneered. "They are confused and afraid, and don't know what to say. So they say nothing."

We went to his office, in a shabby building. He sat in grand style behind a large desk. On the wall hung the mandatory portrait of the President, Colonel Taya—a handsome man with a moustache. I sat at a coffee table. We talked business—about the economic potential of

TREES OVERTAKEN BY THE DUNES, KIFFA

Mauritania, the iron deposits in the north and the rich fishing grounds off the coast. We talked imports and exports. He argued that American magazines need permanent representatives here. He discussed the strategic importance of the country. He was like a man on dry ground pretending to row a boat. The room had not been swept, and sand was accumulating in the corners.

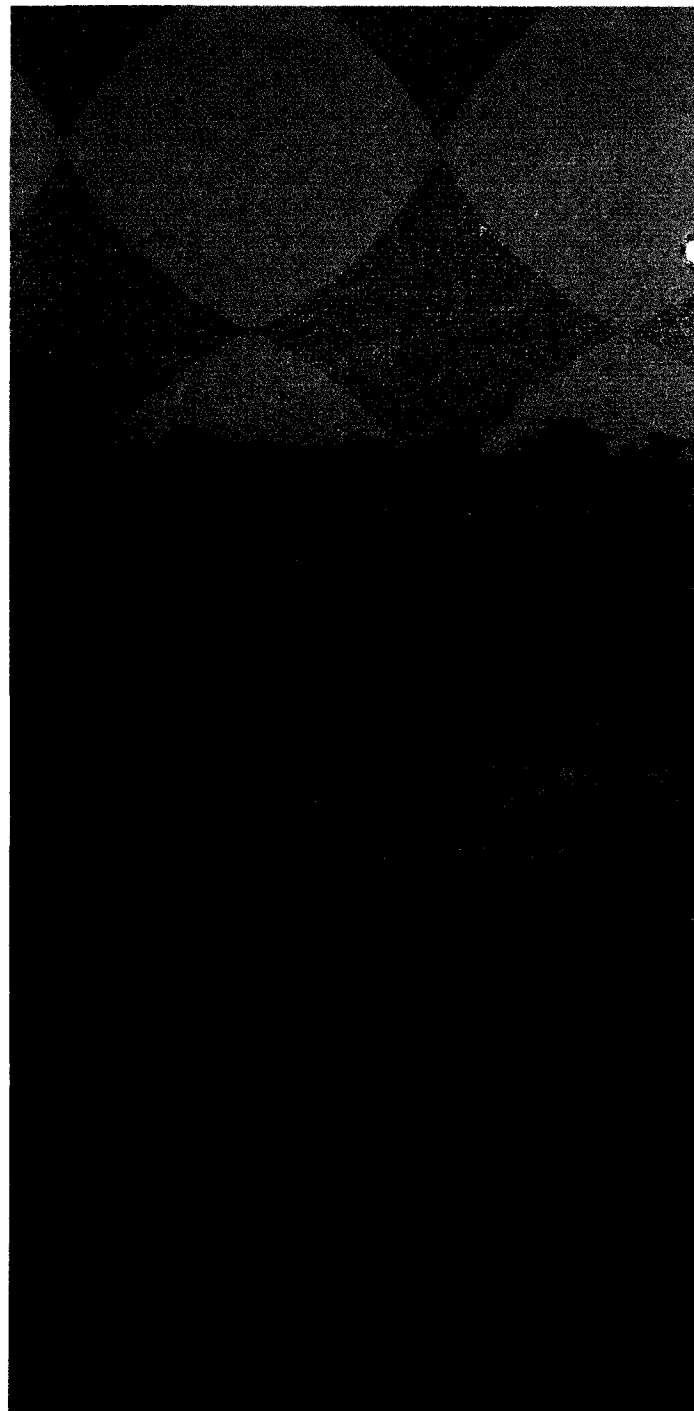
INSHALLAH: GOD WILLING. YOU HEAR IT AGAIN AND again in conversation, a sort of cultural reflex, a constant reminder of faith. We will meet for tea, God willing. The weather will change, the rains will come, and our herds will survive, *inshallah*. And if none of it happens, that, too, is God's will.

Westerners accuse Islam of excessive fatalism—but fatalism is just the ingredient necessary to function in the Sahara. I talked to the director of the Peace Corps in Mauritania, who said that the American way is to take action today for a better life tomorrow—which is equally a statement of faith. In Mauritania the Peace Corps has proved largely impotent. The desert twitches, and sweeps aside good intentions. If nature has been subdued in the industrial West, in the Sahara it, or God, remains the primordial power. You live here as a guest. Soon you learn to think like others, and find yourself even in your most private thoughts saying *inshallah*.

KIFFA IS THE CAPITAL OF A REGION CALLED THE ASSABA, 350 miles to the east of Nouakchott, on the paved road that crosses southern Mauritania. The road is interrupted by frequent security checkpoints. Immediately to the south there is trouble on the river; to the north there is desert. The law is as capricious as the weather. The soldiers are uncertain. I went by air to Kiffa, and overflew their scrutiny.

Once a fertile savanna, the Assaba has come under full assault by the Sahara. The airport at Kiffa is a dirt runway scraped through the brown scrubland outside town. I waited to disembark while an old woman tried to descend the stairs. She was a back-country Moor, a nomad from the open desert. For minutes she hesitated in the doorway. She gripped the rails and surveyed the angle. Her problem was not physical inability but understanding. These were her first stairs: she had climbed them to get on the airplane, and now she had to figure a way down. A crowd at the bottom shouted advice. She turned one way, then the other, and finally started down backward. Half-way down she ran out of ideas and froze. Her expression was anguished. A group of men came from below and lifted her to the ground.

It was summer, the end of the rainy season. A cumulus cloud towered in the haze and humidity. No one dared hope for a storm; for months the sky had been full of false



promise. The land was sparse. The people at the airport looked idle and unhealthy.

I do not know the population of Kiffa, and I am not sure anyone does. It looks like a town of 10,000; I would guess that because of drought the number is triple that. Still, it is dispersed and uncrowded. Stone houses line empty dirt streets. The place is brown and tan, like the desert dust that settles on it. Groups of young Moorish men in white and pale-blue robes walk abreast. They are haughty and unwelcoming. Here, too, relations between the races are difficult. There is a market, run by African



women, where the heat is magnified by the confines of airless alleys. Elsewhere there are a few small grocery stores with butane refrigerators to keep bottled drinks cool. There is no electricity. People dig individual wells and drink tainted water. There is no sewage system. Cholera, polio, measles, tuberculosis, malaria, typhoid, hepatitis, a host of parasites, and probably AIDS exist here. One death is hardly distinguished from another.

I stayed in Kiffa with a Peace Corps worker named John Stingley. At age forty he was a wizened, balding man with a full beard and a cautious expression—not the

poster image of an enthusiastic volunteer. Stingley was a sometime rock musician and forester from coastal Oregon. His last job there had been as a low-paid technician, trudging the rainy slopes and counting saplings. He told me he joined the Peace Corps out of curiosity. He said he wanted to dry out his boots.

He was idealistic, too. With three years of forestry school behind him, and a lot of practical experience, he thought he could do the world some good. The Peace Corps had sent him to the front lines to plant trees and fight the Sahara. He was a better soldier than most. Near

the completion of the two-year tour only fifteen of his original group of forty-one volunteers remained. The others had quit owing to sickness and discouragement. Stingley himself had lost thirty pounds and gained back only fifteen. He lived in Kiffa utterly alone, with little backup. His relations with the local authorities were poisoned by corruption, mistrust, and racial politics. Stingley stayed on, but he no longer believed he could help. He had grown his trees and watched them die. He blamed Mauritanian neglect and the weather. Now he was only counting the days until the end. It is not easy to fight a hopeless war.

The Peace Corps rented his house from the biggest landlord in town. It was a two-room bungalow at the center of a walled dirt yard. With the exception of a scraggly tree by the porch, the yard was bare. This embarrassed Stingley, who said he would have planted it except for the herds of neighborhood goats. They were the bane of his existence. They bounded over the walls and wandered the yard at will. Goats are among the worst culprits in desertification. They eat even spined plants, and destroy young trees by cropping them down to their roots. Stingley hated them with professional vigor, but he might have missed them if they were gone. Together he and the animals danced a mad ballet. When he spotted them in his yard, he stepped threateningly off the porch and waved his arms. They watched and pretended not to care. He started after them, and they thundered around the house in mock fright. He was nimble and sly, and doubled back to catch them by surprise. They thundered the other way, just out of reach. He threw stones; they pranced. If he cornered them, they escaped over the wall and returned later to test his vigilance.

We drew water from a deep well at the front of the yard. It was a laborious job of hauling up buckets hand over hand and filling plastic jerricans. Stingley did not mind. He filtered and sterilized the water with the patience of a man living alone. His housekeeping was immaculate. He cooked on a camp stove and ate simply. He kept a daily journal in tight handwriting. He was proud that he had not been sick for months.

IN BRILLIANT SUNLIGHT THE NEXT MORNING WE WENT to the nursery, where a crew of Africans cared for seedlings under Stingley's direction. The laborers were employees of the Mauritanian forestry department, to which Stingley was attached as a sort of extension agent. They had not been paid in months, and were growing weak from malnourishment. Stingley claimed that the bosses were keeping the wages. He could not bear the suffering of his men and had lent them money from his own meager salary. In return they treated him as their friend and protector. He had protested on their behalf, to no avail. He was frustrated by his inability to help.

Still, he brightened up among his seedlings. There were some 40,000 of them in the nursery, grown in sacks

for transplantation. He led me through, bending over them, cupping the fragile leaves in his hands, discussing the attributes of the different species. Mostly he raised mesquite, which roots well in difficult soils, finds water, grows fast, and can be cut to the ground and survive. The other seedlings were acacias, desert bushes, and a local tree called the neem, which was his favorite, because of its resistance to goats.

Within the confines of the nursery the project was successful: after several reseeds Stingley had achieved a 90 percent germination rate. I asked about the longer-term prospects of survival. He shook his head. In the United States the survival rate is roughly 80 percent; he guessed survival in Mauritania to be at most eight percent, depending on the project. He blamed livestock, lack of care and watering, and the weather. He described walking through old projects in which every sapling was dead. He described watching his own saplings die.

We discussed the current crop. Most of the trees were intended for planting along the roads leading out of town. The idea was to fight drifting sand. But there were no trucks or crews available, and already the planting season was ending. Stingley had heard rumors that in fact many of the trees were destined for the yards of the governor and the chief of police. He shrugged. "At least they might get watered."

Other trees were being given away on the street. One afternoon, as we watched, the nursery crew handed 15,000 seedlings over a fence to crowds of women. The women seemed delighted. Stingley was skeptical. He had wanted to sell them for a token fee and include instructions on how to plant them. I asked him if he thought any would survive. He smiled quizzically and answered, *Inshallah*.

We went to see recent plantings at the northern edge of town. They were mesquite bushes, regularly spaced across the upwind slope of a long, powdery dune. A group of children from nearby houses followed us across a fence and along the crest. The land to the northeast was a vast eroded plain, a desert shadow of earlier savanna. A few sturdy trees remained, but the grass was gone, turned to dirt and sand. The land was harsh but not lifeless. Spiny bushes had taken root along the washes and in the shelter of rocks. A car track led across the plain and disappeared into the distance. Out there the main mass of the Sahara stretched in eternal buttes and sand seas. The sunlight was relentless; it pushed away even the memory of rain.

Here on the dune the mesquite plantation had failed. The sand had kept moving, exposing the roots of the bushes, slowly killing them. The fence sagged where we and others had climbed over it. Soon it would let in the goats. I asked the children which way the dune was drifting. They pointed here and there. But I could see for myself that it threatened their houses. The sand was slipping into town. □



FIRST ENCOUNTERS

JOSEF STALIN AND WINSTON CHURCHILL

HERE WAS CHURCHILL, staunch anti-Bolshevist—the man who in 1919 had spearheaded Allied military intervention against the Red Army—flying off to Moscow to confer with that commissar of commissars Josef Stalin. The irony was not lost on either man. But by August of 1942 Russia had been under heavy German attack for fourteen months, and the Prime Minister thought it politic to inform the Soviet Marshal personally that his allies were not ready for a second front in Europe that year. Stalin would not be pleased.

State Villa No. 7, where Churchill was taken on arrival, was a luxurious country house with a more modern bathroom than the one at Chequers, and goldfish in the garden like those at Chartwell. The Soviet leader received Churchill at the Kremlin that evening and, as expected, did not like his news. Stalin exuded displeasure. A man not prepared to take risks could not win a war, he grumbled. Troops must be blooded in battle. Churchill kept his cool. He forbore mention of

his host's not-so-distant alliance with their now mutual enemy, and then placated him by divulging plans for Operation Torch, against German forces in North Africa.

Discord continued, but on the last evening, when Churchill came to say good-bye, Stalin softened. He suggested drinks at his own house, which was reached by many twists and turns within the Kremlin. His daughter—a handsome redhead, Churchill observed—laid the table while her father uncorked various bottles. The hour that Churchill had planned for extended to seven. Talk and wine flowed freely, and in a moment of rare intimacy Stalin admitted that even the stresses of war did not compare to the terrible struggle to force the collective-farm policy on the peasantry. Millions of Kulaks had been, well, eliminated. The historian Churchill thought of Burke's dictum "If I cannot have reform without injustice, I will not have reform," but the politician Churchill concluded that with the war requiring unity, it was best not to moralize aloud. —*Nancy Caldwell Sorel*

Music



Beached

Brian Wilson as the ultimate bananafish

by Francis Davis

"Miss Carpenter. Please. I know my business," the young man said. "You just keep your eyes open for any bananafish. This is a perfect day for bananafish."

"I don't see any," Sybil said.

"That's understandable. Their habits are very peculiar." He kept pushing the float. The water was not quite up to his chest. "They lead a very tragic life," he said. "You know what they do, Sybil?"

She shook her head.

"Well, they swim into a hole where there's a lot of bananas. They're very ordinary-looking fish when they swim in. But once they get in, they behave like pigs. Why, I've known some bananafish to swim into a banana hole and eat as many as seventy-eight bananas." He edged the float and its passenger a foot closer to the horizon. "Naturally, after that they're so fat they can't get out of the hole again. Can't fit through the door."

—J. D. Salinger, "A Perfect Day for Bananafish"

LIKE MOST solitary activities, reading encourages daydreaming, and this might explain why a book can call up memories of another to which it bears absolutely no resemblance. I hadn't thought of J. D. Salinger's short stories for years, until starting *Wouldn't It Be Nice?*, the autobiography of Brian Wilson, the former Beach Boy whose songs for his group—about little deuce coupes, California

girls, and the warmth of the sun—are themselves part of my generation's collective memory. (Wilson wrote the book with Todd Gold, a reporter for *People* magazine.) "A Perfect Day for Bananafish" sentimentalizes childhood, ends with a suicide, and takes place, for the most part, on the beach. I first read it, in Salinger's *Nine Stories*, in the summer of 1963, when its author was still fashionable and the Beach Boys were

on the radio with Wilson's "Surfer Girl."

When not lost in a book, I spent that summer fine-tuning my transistor with the skill of a safecracker, listening to all my local Philadelphia stations but pulling in signals from cities as far away as Chicago and Indianapolis on clear nights. It was on a station from Buffalo, of all places, that I first heard "Surfer Girl," a ballad so tender in its evocation of beaches and blondes that it sounded sunburned. Its intricate and shapely vocal harmonies, which I later found out were inspired by those of the Four Freshmen, a 1950s jazz vocal group, gave me goosebumps, even through the static.

But my reason for dragging Salinger into this is that Wilson is pop music's biggest bananafish—bigger than even Elvis Presley, who, in his own way, rewrote the book on the artist as social invalid, substituting gluttonous overindulgence in fats and pharmaceuticals for the asceticism of a Dickinson or a Proust (or the asceticism of Salinger and his tiresome Seymour Glass, bananafish of a leaner, more sensitive school). In an amusing anecdote in *Wouldn't It Be Nice?*, Wilson reveals that his only meeting with Presley, in a Los Angeles recording studio in 1969, ended with The King's shaking his head in disbelief and saying to his entourage, "Let's go, boys. This guy's crazy."

CELEBRITY-comeback sagas, the genre into which Wilson's book falls, usually begin with the narrator's having hit rock bottom and then backtrack in an effort to explain what precipitated the fall. *Wouldn't It Be Nice?* starts off in 1982, as Wilson—"a zonked-out zombie, a star-crossed sixties head who took a drug trip and never returned," "a grown man [then forty] who functioned with the emotional capacity of a deeply disturbed six-year-old"—is told of his expulsion from the Beach Boys. Wilson had formed the group in 1961. The other original members were his younger brothers Dennis and Carl, their cousin Mike Love, and Al Jardine, a football teammate of Brian's in high school in Hawthorne, California, a working-class suburb of Los Angeles. In the beginning record buyers probably had trouble figuring out which striped-shirted Beach Boy was which, but the group began as an extension of Wilson's vision as a songwriter and record produc-

er. Although he generally didn't write the Beach Boys' lyrics, he did practically everything else.

"The songs might've sounded simple," Wilson observes later in the book, presumably meaning the Beach Boys' string of hits beginning with "Surfin' Safari" in 1962,

but the complex weave and back-grounds and textures were all thoroughly thought out before I ever got into the studio. Only after I heard the finished song in my head did I begin building the tracks in the studio. I knew exactly what instruments I wanted, the arrangements, and the vocals. Everyone learned his part individually, a process that made perfect sense to me because I knew how the final version would sound. But it left the other guys in the dark till the end, infuriated.

By 1982 what infuriated the rest of the Beach Boys was that Wilson's songs were never leaving his head, and perhaps not going on even there. "Back in those days, I was content to live inside myself, a mass of misery and confusion," writes Wilson, who, in addition to smoking five or six packs of Marlboros a day, was "consuming unthinkable quantities of junk food, booze, and cocaine," not to mention untold cups of "megacoffee," each made with as many as six spoonfuls of instant-coffee crystals and "sugar—lots of it." By then carrying 340 pounds on his once athletic six-foot-two-inch frame, Wilson also neglected personal hygiene, out of fear that the faucets in his bathroom would run blood, snakes, or fire. "In the past two years, I'd been sponged in the hospital and taken the rare dip in the pool, but I hadn't showered or bathed once."

Divorced from his wife, Marilyn, and discouraged by her from seeing their daughters, Carnie and Wendie (now members of the pop group Wilson Phillips), he was then living with Carolyn Williams, ostensibly his nurse but "more like a wife or girlfriend," and her three children. Williams kept Wilson supplied with "food and booze" but "otherwise left me alone." Indeed, he writes, she left him alone to the point of not bothering to phone for help when he passed out on the floor after inhaling four full grams of cocaine. When he came to, the next morning, she blithely asked Wilson to call his accountant to ask for money.

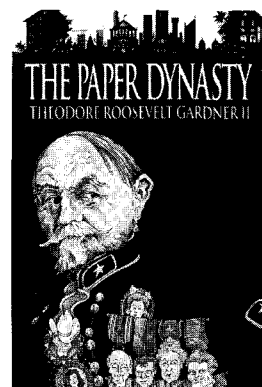
The call was to no avail. Wilson was "broke and in arrears to the IRS"—or so he was led to believe by the Beach Boys and their management, who were attempting to force him back into the care of Dr. Eugene Landy, an unorthodox California psychotherapist whom they had fired as Wilson's keeper five years earlier.

Wilson had ceased touring full-time with the Beach Boys in 1965, needing solitude to write the group's songs and produce its records. But along with drugs and the emotional wounds inflicted on him by a physically abusive father and an indifferent alcoholic mother, Wilson blames his nearly fatal tailspin on the strain of being both his group's *auteur* and its cash cow. In the early sixties, he writes, Capitol Records pressured him into delivering enough material for as many as four albums a year, and a contract the Beach Boys signed with Columbia Records in 1977 stipulated that Wilson—by then deep in his funk—had to supply at least 70 percent of the group's songs. Considering that Wilson's output had been decreasing since 1967 or so, when he had withdrawn into himself to work on *Smile*, his unrealized "teenage symphony to God," some might argue that his dementia resulted from his having taken to absurd extremes the hedonistic consumerism extolled in some of the Beach Boys' most famous songs.

This, however, strikes me as an uncharitable way of looking at Wilson's plight, even though it's true that the Beach Boys have become synonymous with summer and mindless fun on the beach, much as Guy Lombardo once was with New Year's Eve and hypocritical Auld Lang Syne. Along with "Fun, Fun, Fun" and the other joyrides most people think of when they hear the Beach Boys mentioned, Wilson has written songs that illuminate—as Mark Moses, who wrote about pop music for *The New Yorker* until his death, in 1989, eloquently put it—"the melancholy longing that hides just behind those songs' easy good times."

Moses cited Wilson's "In My Room," a song whose anthemlike melody and lyrics (by Gary Usher, one of Wilson's numerous songwriting partners) delineate the fine line an emotionally isolated teenager is likely to draw between privacy and loneliness,

This book was not meant to send the Chandlers into hiding.



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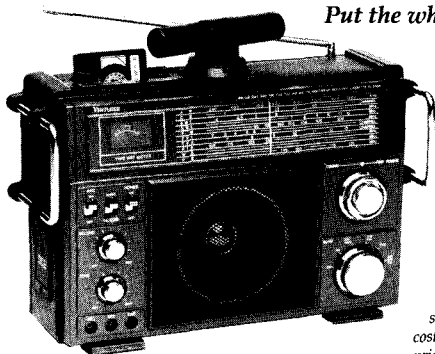
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"DEDUCTION"

The dastardly deed was done with SCISSORS by a CENSOR in the CUTTING ROOM. Extra letters in clues' definitions are given in parentheses after solution notes. Across.

1. SA-MBA 6. W(ASP)ISH 11. E-GOT-RIP 12. P(L)UT-O (c) 13. T-EARDROPS 14. GAS-TROP-OD (rev.) 15. (a) LACK (u) 17. TAC-KLE (rev.) 18. FORT(IF)IES (t) 20. AL(TIME)TER 24. MIGHT (double def.) (t) 26. BO(R)ON 27. BAN-TAMS 28. AG-LOW 30. VAULTS (double def.) (t) 31. SO(C)-KING 32. RINGER (double def.) 33. HEA(L)TH 34. RE-CORD (n) Down. 1. SE(a)TTLE 2. AGE(D) (g) 3. MOS(AIC)S (CIA rev.) 4. CAR(DAM)OM 5. A(IRS)T-REAM 7. APPR(A)ISE 8. PUMP-KIN (r) 9. STOOL (rev.) 10. HOR-DIES 16. ALL-I(AN)CE (o) 18. FISHTAIL (anag.) 19. F(R)OGS 20. AMBUSH (anag.) (o) 21. T-ASTER 22. SO(ONER)S (rev.) 23. O-NWARD (drawn rev.) 25. T-AUNT (m) 26. BAS(I)E 29. LO-GO

as quite possibly "the saddest song in all of rock." Wilson himself refers to "In My Room" frequently in *Wouldn't It Be Nice?*, recalling either pianos in empty recording studios or the piano in the music room of his parents' house, the room he moved his bed into as a teenager. But even among Wilson's own songs "In My Room" faces stiff competition from the two that open and close the 1966 album *Pet Sounds*, his masterpiece.

"Caroline, No," the final number on *Pet Sounds*, is the ultimate breakup song, but it's also about "growing up and the loss of innocence," as Wilson describes it. Graced by one of his most touching and harmonically sinuous melodies, it ends with the sound of his dog barking at a speeding train. ("Can't you see me on the back of that train," Wilson asks his wife, without waiting for an answer. "I can. Just going away.")

What is so affecting about "Wouldn't It Be Nice?" the surging, up-tempo song that opens *Pet Sounds*, is its virginal ebullience: it's a teenager's idyllic vision of what married life will be like, which urges you to forget that things seldom work out that way. Songs such as these (and such as "The Warmth of the Sun," "Don't Worry, Baby," and "I Just Wasn't Made for These Times") enable us to overlook the adolescent specificity of their lyrics. Divorced men and women who hear "Wouldn't It Be Nice?" probably find themselves thinking of their ex-spouses and wondering what went wrong.

The sad songs can also affect the way we hear Wilson's odes to joy. Written by a young man who spent far more time on the piano bench than on the beach (and whose ocean phobia prevented him from ever mounting a surfboard), Wilson's songs turn out to be less about fun than about the unfulfilled desire for it. I think that's why they struck a chord with me as a teenager who had no access to a car, much less to surf, and I know that's why they strike a chord with me as an adult.

ASIDE FROM Wilson himself, the central figures in his autobiography are his late father, Murry Wilson, and his shrink. Wilson says that his father terrorized him as a child, savagely beating him and once even throwing a newspaper on the kitchen floor and ordering him to defecate on

it. A second-rate songwriter himself (a group called the Bachelors recorded his "Two Step Side Step" in 1952, and Lawrence Welk once played it on TV), the elder Wilson appointed himself the Beach Boys' manager. After badgering Brian into signing over the publishing rights to his songs, Murry sold the catalogue, in 1969, for \$700,000—petty cash, given the millions of dollars that Wilson's songs have earned for their publishers in the years since. (Brian Wilson, the only member of the group or its various songwriting teams who stands to benefit from a reassignment of the publishing rights, is now challenging the 1969 deal in court.)

Eugene Landy is the man Wilson credits with springing him from his bananahole. A strict behaviorist, Landy put Wilson under round-the-clock team surveillance, believing that (in Wilson's words) "if the patient's behavior was changed, his feelings and emotions would change accordingly." Regaining control of Wilson in 1982 and immediately weaning him from drugs and empty calories, Landy brought his weight down to a fit 186 pounds within three years, Wilson says. To teach Wilson self-reliance, he enrolled him in a wilderness-survival program. He retaught him such everyday skills as shopping for groceries and making small talk at the dinner table. (At one moment in *Wouldn't It Be Nice?*, Wilson, following Landy's instructions to look people in the eye and introduce himself, says before a concert, "Hello, I'm Brian Wilson," to his daughter Carnie, whom he has failed to recognize.)

"The only person I'd ever really listened to before was my dad," Wilson writes.

I listened to him solely because he made me. He beat me. He threatened me with pain. He tortured me psychologically. . . .

Lo and behold, Landy comes into my life and he has the same power. He beat me too—but not physically, like my dad. He beat me at my own Scrabble game in my head. It was dumbfounding how he got inside my head, knew my thoughts. . . .

But Landy had more in common with Murry Wilson than Brian indicates: the good doctor fancied himself a songwriter too. With Landy's encouragement Wilson started writing songs again and resumed his recording career with an uncertain-sounding solo album

called *Brian Wilson*, released in 1989. Landy's name appears alongside Wilson's as co-composer (presumably lyricist) of two of that album's eleven songs, and on three others Wilson shares credit with Landy and Alexandra Morgan, Landy's longtime fiancée.

In 1988, shortly before California's Board of Medical Quality Assurance challenged Landy's credentials on the basis of a complaint filed in 1984 by Carolyn Williams, Landy released Wilson from his care, referring him to a colleague and becoming his (as Wilson explains it) "friend, partner, and manager." Citing the stress that court proceedings would put on Wilson's fragile psyche, Landy agreed to a two-year suspension of his practice in California, although he remained licensed to practice in New Mexico and Hawaii.

Last April 1 Landy agreed to dissolve his business partnership with Wilson and to have no contact with him for a period of ninety days, in exchange for which Carl Wilson, of the Beach Boys, agreed to postpone what amounts to a custody suit for his brother.

Wouldn't It Be Nice? thus ends like a cliffhanger, with Brian Wilson's fate still uncertain even at press time. Aside from these recent developments, the book reveals little that anyone who has followed Wilson's and the Beach Boys' fortunes over the years doesn't already know. The old news includes Wilson's sexual relationship with his wife's older sister, Diane, and his unconsummated desire for her younger sister, Barbara; the drowning death, in 1983, of Wilson's brother and fellow drug abuser Dennis; and the musical disagreements between Wilson and his cousin Mike Love, who from the beginning opposed Wilson's moodier and more experimental songs, and under whose de facto leadership the Beach Boys have become middle-aged teenagers, an enjoyable to hear but painful to watch oldies act. All of this and more has been detailed in other books, most notably Steven Gaines's exemplary *Heroes and Villains: The True Story of the Beach Boys*, which was published in 1986.

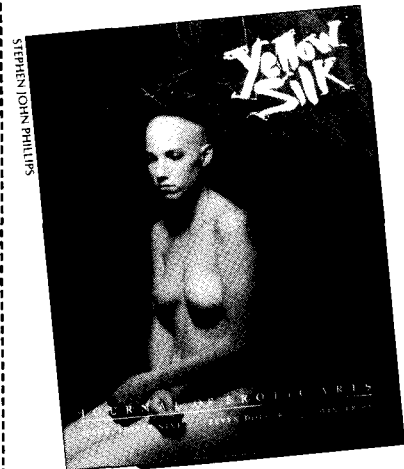
Still, like the dog barking at the train at the end of "Caroline, No," or like the idealistic optimism of the song from which *Wouldn't It Be Nice?* borrows its name, Wilson's unironic telling of his sad and often sordid story can break your heart. □

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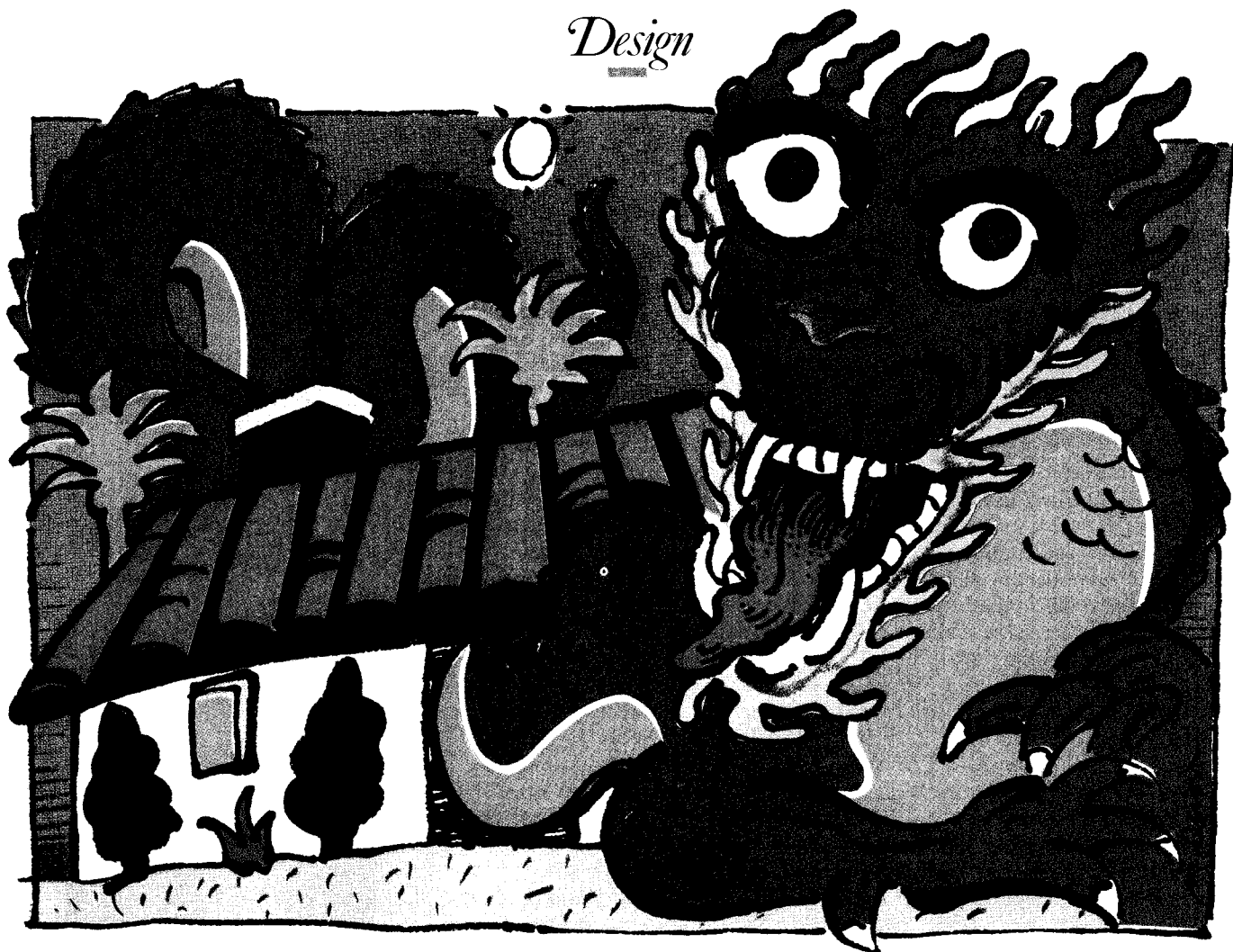
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Lucky Houses

Home builders in southern California are learning to heed the Chinese art of feng shui

by Philip Langdon

FOR MORE THAN fifty years Los Angeles's Chinatown, a four-square-mile enclave just north of downtown, has fulfilled the daily needs of urban Chinese people while also attracting tourists and others hungry for food and atmosphere. Yet it's hard to spend much time in southern California without seeing Chinatown as an expression of conditions that are increasingly losing force. Most of today's Chinese immigrants do not live or work in Chinatown; for them, living as large extended families in apartments close to the shops is neither necessary nor appealing. More of-

ten than not, Chinese immigrants now choose to do something very different: become suburbanites.

As the Chinese settle into subdivisions miles removed from Chinatown, home builders are trying to learn to design and market houses in ways that will attract them. The 1990 census showed that people born in Asia or on the islands of the Pacific, or with ancestors from that part of the world, make up nearly a tenth of the state's population. During the 1980s California's Asian population grew 127 percent, to 2.8 million. The influx has come from many places, among them

Taiwan, Hong Kong, South Korea, Vietnam, and the Philippines.

The Caucasian building company considered most attentive to the Chinese is Lewis Homes, a family-run firm based in Upland, in San Bernardino County. Five years ago, when Lewis Homes bought thirty acres of land in El Monte, about fifteen miles east of Los Angeles, Randall Lewis, the company's marketing director, began visiting other builders' developments nearby to find out what was selling. "Everybody said, There are a lot of Chinese buying here; you'd better study the *feng shui*," Lewis told me.

Feng shui (pronounced *fung-shway*) is an intricate subject to master. Sarah Rossbach, in her book *Feng Shui*, calls it "the Chinese art of placement." Derek Walters, in his book *Feng Shui*, calls it "the Chinese art of designing a harmonious environment." By all accounts *feng shui* is ancient, having been developed over thousands of years of Chinese civilization. Its tenets have won a following not only in Chinese lands but also, in varied forms, in Korea, Vietnam, and other parts of Asia. Its aim is to create an auspicious relationship between human beings and their surroundings, both natural and man-made. Correct placement is believed to augur well for residents' health, harmony, and prosperity.

Two years ago Lewis hired a Chinese-American "cultural consultant," Angi Ma Wong, to familiarize his company's designers and marketing personnel with Asian behavior and beliefs. When I visited Lewis Homes' Covina Palms development, in Covina, about twenty miles east of Los Angeles, Lewis invited one of the development's homeowners—Michael Ho, a seventy-year-old retired professor from Hong Kong—to come talk with us.

Ho, a lean man with gray hair, said that before deciding to settle at Covina Palms, he had looked at a house in a subdivision called Hillcrest but had decided against it. "The front and rear doors were in a straight line, without any obstruction," he said. *Feng shui* authorities believe that an unimpeded straight path from front to rear door allows cosmic energy (known as *ch'i*) to flow in and out of the house too fast.

Is it true, Lewis asked, that when energy flows out of the house too swiftly, the resident's finances will suffer? "It is not only money," the professor answered. "It is also one's quiet heart."

The Hillcrest house had another major problem, Ho recalled: "It was difficult to find a suitable place to put the bed." *Feng shui* dictates that the owner's bedroom be in a particular part of the house—most commonly the house's southwest corner, but it can be elsewhere, especially if the owner's horoscope indicates a different point. When the foot of the bed faces the door, some Chinese regard it as a terrible portent, because it echoes the funeral custom of positioning the deceased with feet toward the door. At

Hillcrest it would have been difficult to put the bed in a position other than facing the door. At least the master bedroom at Hillcrest did not have a beam above the bed. When a beam runs lengthwise over the middle of the bed, the couple who sleep there are said to be at greater risk of separation or divorce. A beam running across the width of the bed foretells injury, sickness, or even early death.

Lewis listened to Ho intently. How could he not? Hillcrest is one of his own company's subdivisions. Obviously, even Lewis Homes still has some distance to go in dealing with *feng shui*.

MANY AUTHORS OF books on *feng shui* call it a cross between art and science, or a pseudo-science, because it employs meticulously gathered facts from geography, meteorology, and astronomy but does not analyze them with modern scientific procedures. The information gathered for *feng shui* is applied mainly to three kinds of settings—gravesites, workplaces, and homes. Raymond Cheng, an architect and developer in the suburban town of Alhambra, says that designers pay more attention to *feng shui* when shaping individual houses than when designing apartment buildings. This does not mean that apartment dwellers feel free to ignore *feng shui*. Often Chinese-Americans try to avoid apartments that exhibit bad *feng shui* characteristics.

Many California home builders first learned about *feng shui* by accident. "In areas where there were a lot of Asian home buyers, builders would sell most of their houses but find that certain houses wouldn't sell," says Angi Ma Wong, the daughter of a former diplomat for Nationalist China. "Even when the price was lowered, Chinese wouldn't buy them." A house facing the end of a road or the terminus of a cul-de-sac was hard to sell to Chinese, because the street represents a "killing force," which it is felt should not be directed at the home. As sometimes occurs with *feng shui*, a belief that probably stemmed from observable hazards of nature has been extended to the point where it looks like superstition. The slowly traveled cul-de-sac is treated as if it were as risky as a rushing highway. Salespeople asked customers why they had rejected the houses, and found out about *feng shui*.

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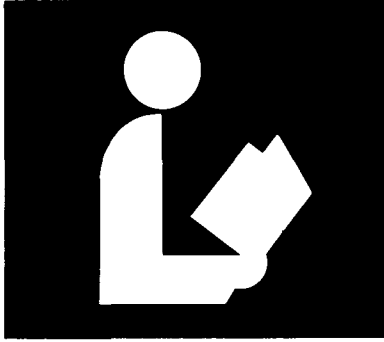


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When a house is specifically designed for a Chinese client, its siting and other features may be submitted to a *feng shui* master, also known as a spiritual adviser or geomancer. Even when considering a tract house, many Chinese employ a geomancer to tell them whether the house is acceptable and how any defects can be corrected.

Four out of five Hong Kong-born Chinese follow *feng shui*, according to Danny Chang, the publisher of *Asian Homebuyers Digest*. "Taiwan buyers are a little less superstitious; maybe fifty percent believe in it," he says. A large gulf exists between professionals such as engineers and scientists, many of whom scoff at *feng shui*, and entrepreneurs, who tend to take it very seriously. Immersion in the modern world tends to erode such beliefs. For example, second- or third-generation Chinese-Americans are much less likely to embrace *feng shui* than are those who were born in Asia. And "the Japanese people I deal with are pretty much contemporary-minded," says David Tsai, a Chinese-born architect in Monterey Park, a close-in suburb that is 56 percent Asian. When I suggested to Wong that belief in *feng shui* would inevitably decline in the United States, she disagreed. "Westerners, especially those who do business in Hong Kong and Singapore, Malaysia, and Taiwan, are having a rising fascination with it," she observed. "I see references to it all the time."

WHEN THE market for new houses began to feel the effects of the recession two years ago, a number of builders became more alert to Asians' concerns. On average Asian-Americans in California enjoy healthy household incomes. Chinese newcomers with businesses in the Far East frequently have substantial savings at their disposal. Many Asians' practice of pooling money from parents, grandparents, and other relatives further enhances their ability to buy houses, even in an expensive state where the median new-home price exceeds \$190,000. Since 1988 eight of the state's largest builders, and also banks and other businesses, have hired Wong to give seminars or training sessions. Some builders have hired salespeople of Chinese, Korean, Filipino, or other Asian ancestry. Builders such as Akins,

which operates in Orange County, and Warmington Homes and Kaufman and Broad, which operate throughout California, have tried to refine their marketing techniques.

Because builders of tract houses do not have the luxury of tailoring each house to its buyer, they look for a set of simple rules that will work for most buyers. The rule that every builder seems to remember best is that it's bad to have a staircase face the front door; fortune can run out of the house. Often builders refrain from planting a tree directly in line with the front door, since it may inhibit the incoming flow of cosmic energy—and wealth. They may be careful to position something between the range and the kitchen sink—opposites that represent fire and water. Wong sometimes functions as a kind of Mrs. Fix-It. She suggests placing plants, mirrors, aquariums, or furniture in certain locations to redirect energy and ameliorate deficiencies. "They're like Band-Aids," she says.

Builders have started to learn not only *feng shui* but also other aspects of Asian cultures, enabling them to be more successful in dealing with customers as well as in designing desirable houses. A prime characteristic attributed to the Chinese is high regard for education. Where a sales brochure directed at Caucasian home buyers might stress "life-style," Warmington Homes's brochure for its Timberline subdivision, on a hillside in Walnut, about twenty-five miles east of Los Angeles, emphasizes local schools, reporting that "the Walnut Valley School District rates among the top 25% at all grade levels, and the campuses of Cal Poly and Mt. San Antonio College are also very close by."

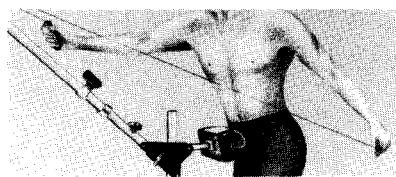
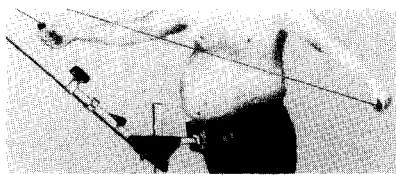
Salespeople have been attempting to learn patience. "They're very cautious in making a decision," Nancy Long, a saleswoman at Timberline, says of the Chinese who are buying there. "They come back six, seven, eight, nine times before they buy." Chinese who are interested in a house may assemble the whole family and stay in a model for an hour, discussing it and moving the furniture around. When I was at Timberline, two Chinese-American men, both about nineteen years old, wearing T-shirts and shorts, entered the model center. I expected Long to treat them in a pe-

remptory manner—what chance could there be of selling a \$350,000 house to a pair of college students? But she gave them a warm welcome. "Many times the kids go out and look at houses," she told me. "If they like them, their parents come back." In fact, it can be difficult to know who will be living in the house and how many people will be involved in the decision to buy. Even when a young couple will be the only occupants, parents or grandparents who seemed to be just tagging along on the model-home tour may have a large say in the decision. The young couple may not believe in *feng shui* themselves, but they may follow it in deference to older relatives. Builders are placing more emphasis on keeping the customer happy after the sale. Shea Homes, which builds houses throughout southern California, reported in 1989 that every sale to a Chinese buyer led to three additional sales. Word of mouth is the best advertising, and for it to succeed, the customers must be satisfied.

Practical concerns of Chinese home buyers also receive some attention. "I tell builders that if they have only a limited time to spend on designing the house, they should spend fifty percent of it on the kitchen," Wong says. "Asians still cook on the range a lot, as opposed to microwaving and oven-cooking, and we cook for crowds because of our extended families." A kitchen designed to attract Chinese will have a stove or cooktop fueled by gas, with generous space overhead to accommodate a wok, and a ventilation system powerful enough to expel smoke and grease to the outdoors. Designers will avoid placing a cabinet or a microwave oven low over the stove and will avoid downdraft ventilation systems, which don't draw well from woks (or from tall pots, for that matter). The kitchen will have ample counter space for chopping and preparing food, and it may even have a metal-lined drawer for bulk storage of rice (or flour, for the non-Chinese).

Builders say it's a good idea to have a number of sizable secondary bedrooms and perhaps a ground-floor den large enough to be used as a bedroom by a parent or grandparent. Because many Chinese wash clothing by hand, they want a laundry sink in the house—not in the garage, where some California builders put the washer and dryer.

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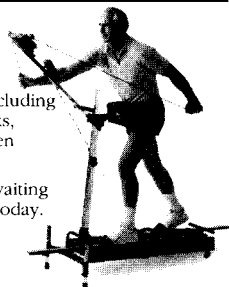
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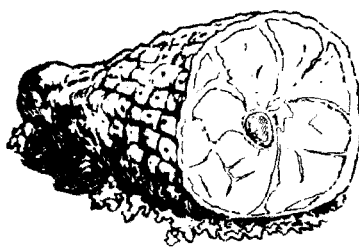
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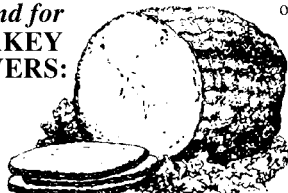
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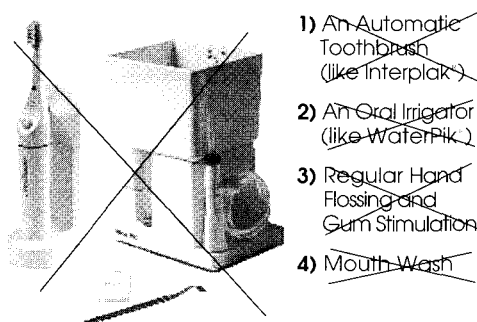
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Security matters a great deal to the Chinese. Asian-American gangs know that some immigrant Chinese, mistrustful of banks, keep a cache of money and valuables in the house. Both the Lewis Homes subdivisions I visited—Covina Palms and El Dorado, in nearby West Covina—are what the builder advertises as "walled and gated" communities.

BECAUSE OF continuing immigration, a number of close-in suburbs, including Monterey Park, Alhambra, San Gabriel, and San Marino, are expected to retain their already large Asian populations while places much farther out, such as Ventura County, central and southern Orange County, and the Chino Hills west of Riverside, are expected to receive new influxes of Asians.

With great rapidity institutions important to the Chinese are becoming established deep in the suburbs, making it easy for many more Chinese to follow. Near the crest of the Puente Hills, in Hacienda Heights, approximately fifteen miles east of Los Angeles, is the grand, sprawling Hsi Lai Temple, completed two years ago by the International Buddhist Progress Society. Fresh-looking shopping centers near the Pomona Freeway have names mounted in both Chinese calligraphy and English lettering. In Los Angeles and Orange counties two supermarket chains, Hong Kong Supermarket and 99 Ranch Market, specialize in prodigious quantities and varieties of Oriental food, eliminating the need to go into Chinatown or—perhaps more to the point—to Monterey Park, which several years ago surpassed Chinatown as the main shopping area for Chinese-Americans.

Builders find themselves in the sometimes sticky position of actively seeking Chinese home buyers—by running ads in Chinese-language newspapers, for instance—and yet not wanting their developments to be so heavily Asian that other racial groups will be made uncomfortable. Often certain streets in a development become predominantly Asian—perhaps because of favorable *feng shui*, but also because family members buy near one another and because many Asians, like many Americans of other backgrounds, prefer to live next to people like themselves. The clustering of nationalities

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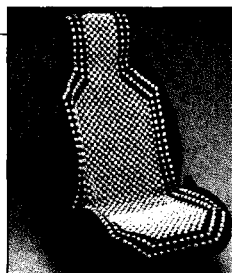
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probably helps to maintain tighter social networks than would otherwise exist in suburban subdivisions. But it clashes with the American public ideology of integration, and it draws attention to cultural differences.

Although self-segregation occurs in Chinese suburbs, just as it has long occurred in cities among immigrants of many nationalities, it doesn't seem to have the bitter undertone that accompanies racial division on, say, university campuses. Many Chinese seem to expect eventually to assimilate into predominantly white society. Chinese often "don't want to live in Monterey Park," says Chang, of *Asian Homebuyers Digest*. "They feel it's too concentrated with Asians. Maybe they feel they're better than the new immigrants—at one time they were new here, but five years later their English has improved, they have some money, so they want to move to a white area where they feel more American." Chang expressed satisfaction with the explosive growth of the Asian-American population—in Los Angeles County it jumped from about 450,000 in 1980 to 907,000 in 1990. But he also mentioned, unhappily, that the population of non-Hispanic whites had dropped by 335,000, or over eight percent. It was as if their departure meant that the Asians had had less of an opportunity to be welcomed into the mainstream.

FOR ALL THE talk about *feng shui*, the dwellings I visited that were built by companies intent on attracting Chinese were typical California see-through houses: anyone who came in the front door—whether a cherished friend or a delivery person from UPS—would be given an unrestricted view of the living room, probably the dining area, perhaps part of the kitchen or family room, and usually a portion of the back yard. The designs aimed for a feeling of spaciousness, even at the expense of privacy. The tall, open interiors seemed stirred-up, dynamic—not at all the haven for "one's quiet heart" that Professor Ho had talked about. The typical master bedroom had no door to separate it from the master bathroom. The tub was invariably set into a corner next to large transparent windows, just as in subdivisions where, presumably, unembarrassed Anglos enjoy soaping up

in full view of their neighbors. Houses like these seem to me to be dubiously suited to an ethnic group known, at least by outsiders, for modesty and reserve.

I think there are two explanations for this seeming mismatch between Asian-Americans and the houses they're getting. First, builders avoid risk. So far they have tried to use their typical showy California tract-house designs and incorporate a few gestures toward Chinese cooking habits or *feng shui* anxieties, but they have not been interested in genuinely reinterpreting domestic architecture for the benefit of one subculture. Second, as David Tsai, the architect, put it, the Chinese arriving from Asia are "part of an international culture." He explained, "They can drive, they can speak English, they can watch the Channel Seven news just like anyone else. They have learned about America from movies, TV series, magazines, books. The people coming here do not want to live as they lived over there. They want to live like Americans."

I have a hunch that given their preference, some Chinese might get more enjoyment from houses that reflect their native culture more strongly than do the stuccoed, vaguely Spanish-style, exhibitionist dwellings now rising on roads with names like Balboa Street, Columbus Drive, and De Gama Lane. But it would take courage on the part of builders and customers alike to inject a deeply Chinese influence into California houses, the way Frank Lloyd Wright once infused his extraordinary architecture with Japanese inspiration.

In southern California in the 1990s approximately 240,000 new Asian households are expected to be formed—nearly five times the number of new non-Hispanic white households, according to the Center for Continuing Study of the California Economy, in Palo Alto. The limited changes of the past few years might presage more substantive changes to come. In any event, builders talk as if they do.

"Southern California as a marketplace is very different from what it was ten years ago," says Lewis, who is clearly enthusiastic about the challenge of adapting to a changing society. "I really think that Los Angeles is a border town, except that it's border to the whole world." □

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Books

A Radical Democrat

by David A. Hollinger

JOHN DEWEY AND
AMERICAN DEMOCRACY
by Robert B. Westbrook.
Cornell University Press, \$29.95.

JUSTICE Oliver Wendell Holmes got it right: John Dewey wrote as "God would have spoken, had He been inarticulate, but keenly desirous to tell you how it was." The plodding obscurities and relentless plainness of Dewey's prose make one wonder how such a dreary writer managed to win a readership comparable in scope to that of Ralph Waldo Emerson. Anyone who has struggled with Dewey will welcome *John Dewey and American Democracy*, a new, lucid account of Dewey's ideas, by Robert Westbrook, a historian at the University of Rochester.

Westbrook provides a vigorous, convincing, and readable analysis of the major episodes in Dewey's career, including his conflicts with such other prominent, public intellectuals as Randolph Bourne, Walter Lippmann, Lewis Mumford, and Reinhold Niebuhr. The result is a vision of Dewey as a radical democrat, somewhat to the left of the mainstream of American liberalism. This book also engages Dewey's ideas as potential resources for critical development in our own day. What Westbrook has to say about Dewey's thought gains more interest once we remind ourselves of the dimensions of his prodigious life.

The year Dewey died, 1952, Dwight Eisenhower was elected President, Ralph Ellison published *Invisible Man*, and television sets were appearing in more and more American homes. The world had been very different in the year of Dewey's birth, 1859, when James Buchanan was President, Darwin published *Origin of Species*, most people still believed that Noah's flood could be dated at 2349

B.C., and John Brown's raid on Harpers Ferry failed to ignite a widespread slave revolt.

Dewey was no passive observer of the transformations that occurred during the intervening ninety-three years. An engaged controversialist from his twenties onward, he attracted notice as a psychologist and philosopher as early as the 1880s. His writings on education and politics, as well as on psychology and philosophy, rendered him a national figure early in the new century. By the end of the Progressive Era, Dewey's career was assumed to have peaked: Harvard President A. Lawrence Lowell refused his faculty's request to appoint Dewey to a professorship partly on the grounds that at sixty the Columbia University philosopher was too old to be a good recruitment risk.

But Lowell was wrong. The best was yet to come. In the next fifteen years (1919–1934) Dewey unleashed one of the most sustained bursts of creativity in all of American intellectual history. He produced an astonishing series of major books, including *Reconstruction in Philosophy*, *Human Nature and Conduct*, *Experience and Nature*, *The Public and Its Problems*, *The Quest for*

Certainty, *A Common Faith*, and *Art as Experience*. In the meantime, he hammered away at the deficiencies of American capitalism in the pages of *The New Republic*, and tried to start a third party, to the left of the Democrats.

And it wasn't over yet. Dewey continued during the late 1930s to agitate, and produced a string of philosophical books, including *Logic: The Theory of Inquiry* and *Freedom and Culture*. At seventy-eight he traveled to Mexico City, against the wishes of many of his left-liberal allies, to preside over an independent tribunal—soon called the "Dewey commission"—that significantly discredited Stalin's claims that the exiled Bolshevik Leon Trotsky had allied himself with the Nazis against the Soviet Union. Even during the 1940s Dewey stayed active, criticizing the 1948 presidential campaign of Henry Wallace, and in his ninetieth year he co-authored a technical treatise on epistemology. Dewey applied himself to this book, *Knowing and the Known*, while "working amid noisy, curious children," as Westbrook notes, because the indefatigable Dewey and his new, young wife had adopted two Belgian orphans at the end of the Second World War. When the standard



ILLUSTRATIONS BY TOM LULEVITCH

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edition of Dewey's works is completed, within the next few years, it will run to thirty-seven thick volumes.

THIS REMARKABLE career has never received sustained historical treatment of the sort now provided by Westbrook. We already have a multitude of good books on certain of Dewey's specific activities and ideas, and a few helpful biographical studies, but no author before Westbrook has carried through the entire course of Dewey's career a consistent interpretation attentive to his philosophy, to his politics, and to his life.

Westbrook interprets Dewey as a political thinker, concerned to promote the creation of communities "in which the necessary opportunities and resources are available for every individual" to fulfill himself "through participation in political, social, and cultural life." Dewey's metaphysics, epistemology, psychology, and ethical theory were largely driven, Westbrook argues, by a determination to grasp theoretically and to advance publicly exactly those features of our world that render this "participatory democracy" viable. Prominent among those features were a robust human capacity for the systematic, cooperative use of intelligence, and a natural and social environment sufficiently free of permanent structures to enable human communities to achieve at least some of their own designs. Dewey's world was profoundly contingent and changeable, inhabited by people who were themselves both the products of particular historical forces *and* the agents of genuine novelty.

By persistently linking Dewey with the ideal of participatory democracy, Westbrook wants to inspire us with Dewey's "veneration of *shared* experience." Yet Dewey's message has a rather different emphasis when relayed to us by Richard Rorty, the most visible of Dewey's sympathetic commentators today. In *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity* (1988) and other works, Rorty has defended a sharp separation between public and private life. Rorty speaks from well within the left-liberal, social-democratic tradition that embraces Dewey and Westbrook, but for Rorty, as Westbrook puts it, "politics involves little more than making sure that individuals hurt one another as little as possible and interfere minimally in the

private life of each." It is a bit sectarian of Westbrook to ask that Rorty not "claim the Deweyan label," but *John Dewey and American Democracy* is all the more valuable because it invites a fresh engagement with Dewey, provocatively different from the one already urged by Rorty.

The Dewey we are to engage is one that campus radicals of the early 1960s would have appreciated, had they known of him. Indeed, Westbrook ascribes to Dewey a point of view essentially consistent with the "Port Huron statement" of Students for a Democratic Society (1962). This Dewey is a more critical voice in American life than is the one we have become accustomed to hearing through the works of historians and political theorists. Dewey may have been sincere in his dissatisfaction with the growth of corporate power in American life, we have often been told, but his enthusiasm for social engineering nevertheless promoted a corporate liberalism geared to top-down management of the society by elites whose right to run things was periodically renewed by elections. Not so, Westbrook says; Dewey fought against this drift toward a more "realistic" liberalism, which was promoted instead by Dewey's great contemporary and frequent antagonist Walter Lippmann.

Westbrook reminds us that the liberalism often defended as realistic by social scientists of the 1950s and 1960s followed Lippmann in believing that "decision-making power should be vested in elites who possessed the knowledge and skills to govern effectively." Rival elites were to compete for the votes of an essentially passive and unenlightened electorate. This was not a radical enough democracy for C. Wright Mills and SDS, who still believed "that most men and women could become active participants in the decisions shaping their lives." Dewey is decisively on the radical side of this divide, Westbrook insists.

Even Dewey's often-expressed appreciation for scientific expertise fits the pattern Westbrook discerns. Dewey believed that the "scientific method" was a general mode of thought that the average citizen could learn and apply daily, equipping him or her to deal critically with the claims and counterclaims of the society's leaders. Dewey's paeans to "intelligence" were often



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*THE OTHER
UNDERCLASS*
by Nicholas Lemann

Puerto Ricans are the worst-off ethnic group in the United States. Part of the reason, the author writes, may be that they lack a "true immigrant mentality"—they are still tied emotionally to their island home.



"THAT WOMAN"
by Geoffrey Wheatcroft

Of all the opposition Margaret Thatcher faced as Great Britain's Prime Minister, the bitterest came from liberals, academics, artists, writers, and the media—a group that has been dubbed "the chattering classes." She was a threat, the author argues, to their complacent snobbery.



DEPARTURES
by Jill McCorkle

"The first year was the hardest. Each day was an anniversary. Each day was a countdown of events. Nothing could pull her away from the timetable leading up to or away from his death." A short story.

quoted by advocates of a more technocratic political ideal, according to which the public would be educated to follow the advice of experts, but Westbrook is correct to distinguish Dewey from many of his followers. Dewey blurred a line others sharpened between experts and citizens.

Naïve or not, Dewey the radical democrat was gradually marginalized by the movement of American liberals away from "utopianism." "Whereas Dewey called for the shaping of democratic character and the creation of a common democratic culture suffusing schools, factories, political parties, and other institutions," Westbrook observes, most of his successors in the task of defining American democracy construed it more narrowly. Democracy became little more than a set of political procedures for providing a "minimal level of welfare" and maintaining a balance of power among elites. Liberals virtually abandoned to conservatives any real concern "over the absence of a common culture" in a "segmented market of competing 'life styles' in which the good life is reduced, both morally and aesthetically, to a set of more or less arbitrary preferences among bundles of signifying commodities."

WESTBROOK recovers the underappreciated aspects of Dewey's thinking by reading his works in their historical context. The most dramatic result is a picture of Dewey almost antithetical to that perpetuated in the minds of many left-of-center intellectuals by the legendary attacks made by Randolph Bourne and Lewis Mumford during and shortly after the First World War. Bourne ridiculed Dewey's hope that the war itself might be turned into an instrument for democratic ends. But Dewey saw the war as a "plastic juncture" in history, a moment when the future could be molded in a progressive direction. The war had its own momentum, and the interests that brought it into being were far too powerful to be brought to heel, Bourne insisted. Dewey's failure to stand up against the pressure for war revealed, for Bourne, the degeneration of the entire "pragmatic" way of thinking into a merely technical reason that could be used as an instrument by reactionary forces. Mumford's *The Golden Day* (1926) generalized Bourne's com-

plaint into a sweeping assault on what Mumford characterized as the "pragmatic acquiescence" of Dewey in the face of the prevailing order.

Westbrook is not the first scholar to observe that Dewey's support for the First World War was more a lapse from his avowed principles in favor of social analysis than an application of them. But no one has shown more convincingly than Westbrook how thoroughly Deweyan was Bourne's own analysis of the war: if Dewey failed to assess Wilson's war "pragmatically" as a potential means for attaining democratic ends, Bourne did exactly that, and in relation to precisely the kinds of historical and socioeconomic evidence that a good Deweyan would examine. Bourne did not mount a critique of Dewey's pragmatism; he mounted a pragmatic critique of Dewey's personal failure to practice what he preached.

Bourne has often been upheld as a model "critical" intellectual who jealously guarded his independence amid the temptations of establishments and of the orthodoxies of various oppositional groups. Normally, Dewey is cited as the classic case of the intellectual who caved in. I agree, as Westbrook appears to, that Dewey, when faced with the crisis of the First World War, like other intellectuals in later wars, rationalized forces he should have criticized.

But I also believe that during the twenty years after Bourne's death, in 1918, few American intellectuals came as close as Dewey did to actually living up to the ideal that has come to be associated with Bourne. Westbrook's detailed account of Dewey's public activities during the 1920s and 1930s provides abundant evidence for this view. Dewey managed to keep his distance even from the New Deal and from the Communist Party, both of which inspired in numerous intellectuals a loyalty that admirers of Bourneian independence have since lamented as uncritical and even slavish.

If Westbrook establishes Dewey's closeness to Bourne, he establishes even more compellingly Dewey's distance from Lippmann. America's greatest newspaper columnist was the author of the two most influential critiques of participatory democracy written during Dewey's lifetime, *Public Opinion* (1922) and *The Phantom Public* (1925). Lippmann mocked the faith

that public education could produce a citizenry capable of defining its own interests and acting on them through a government organized around the inefficient and anachronistic notion of "self-determination"; and Lippmann thought self-determination a less important political goal than the provision of basic goods and services. Dewey's response, in *The Public and Its Problems* (1927), resoundingly reaffirmed the singular importance of self-determination, Westbrook shows, and acclaimed the state as the agent of an informed, engaged public, the creation of which, Dewey felt, remained an unfinished social task. Westbrook is obliged to concede that Dewey failed to develop the "politics of knowledge" toward which his critique of Lippmann's elitism pointed. The Dewey emerging from Westbrook's account of the Dewey-Lippmann encounter is radically democratic, all right, but Lippmann's misgivings about democracy are answered more directly by Westbrook than by Dewey himself.

These misgivings are not answered very convincingly, however, even by Westbrook. Westbrook is a historian, not a theorist. For a more complete vindication of the radical democracy that Westbrook hopes his presentation of Dewey can help to inspire, one must go beyond both Dewey and Westbrook. Fortunately, there are a number of theorists of democracy now active on this part of the political spectrum, although they are not generally called Deweyans. These include Michael Walzer, Stephen Holmes, Don Herzog, Amy Gutman, and Sheldon Wolin. Their work confronts exactly the problems that frame Westbrook's study of Dewey, and anyone inspired by Westbrook's Dewey would be well advised to turn to it.

Neither Westbrook nor these theorists of democracy, however, are likely to restore Dewey's writings to the level of popularity they attained sixty, seventy, and eighty years ago. Dewey enjoyed a special fit with his own time and place that helps explain the will- ingness of his contemporaries to struggle through the prose that so confounded Justice Holmes.

Dewey offered a striking combination of challenges and reassurances to the most morally serious, intellectually ambitious members of an increasingly secular, urban, bureaucratized genera-

tion. This Vermont-born champion of industrial civilization urged Americans to believe in their own capabilities for perpetuating the face-to-face, egalitarian democracy associated with the New England town meeting. This prophet of a "great community" advocated the expansion of state power while renewing an individualist rhetoric dear to those weaned on Emerson's essays. This vigorous public moralist assured the members of an increasingly science-dependent society that the scientific method was an agent of ethical regeneration as well as of technological progress. This Anglo-Saxon celebrant of diversity and tolerance encouraged his countrymen to believe that a dynamic, flexible system of public education could preserve and further develop a unified national society. This lapsed Congregationalist embodied the promise of a secular culture continuous in spirit with the Pilgrim fathers. □

Individualism, Japanese Style

by James Fallows

IN THE REALM
OF A DYING EMPEROR
by Norma Field.
Pantheon, \$22.00.

FOREIGN DISCUSSIONS about Japan often boil down to more or less polite versions of a single question: How different are these people, really? In Thailand, I once saw a photo of the man who was then the Thai Prime Minister slithering across a floor on his belly because a member of the Thai royal family was in the room. This behavior, although it made sense within the society's own rules of conduct, struck me as an exception; most other interactions in Thai daily life can be explained by rules that prevail around the world.

In Japan the actions that must be explained by local social rules are more numerous. The chirping, falsetto voice that women adopt when speaking to men, the reflexive bowing even when speaking on the phone—these and other phenomena naturally arouse out-



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siders' interest. The most compelling questions about Japanese behavior are those that concern the balance between individual and group. How can so many millions of people be encouraged, or required, to suppress their impulses and idiosyncrasies so as to blend in with the mass? Why do people so often act as if their identity as *members*—of team, company, or nation—is more important than their individual interests and roles? People in other societies do the same thing, of course, but usually on a limited scale—family by family, on sporting teams, or in armies.

Attempts to account for Japan's group spirit fall mainly into two categories: "system" and "culture." The system approach assumes that Japanese people have the same desires and resentments as people anywhere else, but that an unusually thoroughgoing, subtle, and effective system of controls keeps most of them in line. For instance, Japanese people waste very little time and money suing one another, even though they have the same disagreements that people in other societies resolve in court. The most important single reason is that Japan's courts and legal apparatus have been deliberately kept in a vestigial condition, so that it is hard and costly for citizens to bring suit. Similarly, the main reason Japanese students put up with the notorious rigors of the school system, with its hair-length regulations and endless rote-memory exams, is that they have no choice. Corporate hiring policies are such that students who rebel or slack off during the high school years have virtually no chance of ever getting a good job.

Explanations from the culture category maintain that Japan's people willingly accept the constraints that are placed upon them, just as members of a family or a religious order might, because they know that discipline makes the whole society strong. Japanese spokesmen have usually sounded apologetic when advancing the cultural theories, saying that it would take a while before Japan could "catch up" with individual-minded, rights-oriented democracy as practiced in the West. Recently a number of Japanese intellectuals, along with others in Asia (notably Lee Kuan Yew, of Singapore), have stopped apologizing and started asserting that a more controlled, group-oriented, authoritarian political



system might be better matched to the basic values of their region.

Norma Field's book, which is about individuals who stand up for their own unpopular beliefs in Japan, implicitly offers strong support for the system view. But skipping ahead to that political message may be a disservice to the book. It is remarkable first as a vivid, taut, graceful piece of writing. Being immersed in a foreign culture can be at once exhilarating and frightening: the strangeness you see around you challenges your assumptions and ideas about how society should operate. The real test of writing about a foreign culture is whether the author can convey that exciting yet threatening sense of immersion. *In the Realm of a Dying Emperor* does so with tremendous power.

Field, who teaches Japanese literature at the University of Chicago, was born and raised in Japan. Her father was an American soldier who came to Japan during the Occupation and stayed for a while as a civilian employee. He left the family when she was a child. After finishing high school in Japan, Field came to the United States for college and stayed to make her career here, but her mother and most of her relatives still live in Japan.

In the summer of 1988 Field returned to spend a year in Japan. The visit proved to be well timed. Japan's economic success was ratified and consolidated in this period, and its political system went through upheavals

that seemed important at the time. And what became the most dramatic event in many years began just after Field's arrival: the prolonged and eerily humiliating deathwatch for the Showa Emperor, whom we know as Hirohito.

The Emperor was treated during this time as both more and less than a human being. Out of "respect for His feelings," and in keeping with the Japanese theory that terminally ill patients should not be told what is really wrong with them, newspaper and TV accounts generally refused to mention the name of his disease: abdominal cancer. He was said instead to have taken a "turn for the worse" starting in September. Yet for the next four months there were news-flash updates four times a day and page-one charts about the Emperor's *toketsu* and *gek-ketsu*—how many cubic centimeters of blood he had vomited or discharged from his rectum since the previous report. His actual death, on a rainy Saturday morning early in 1989, was perfectly timed so as to minimize interference with Japan's elaborate New Year's holiday season. It had the air of an administered event, since the Emperor had been kept alive during the preceding months through transfusions totaling some thirty gallons of blood.

The months between the Emperor's "turn for the worse" and his eventual "demise" (a comparably elevated word, rather than the simple counterpart to "death," was used to describe

his passing) seemed dense with powerful but half-expressed emotions, because so many of Japan's successes and failures were bound up with this man. The failures included not just the obvious one, Japan's defeat in the Second World War, but also the country's post-war failure, or refusal, to come to terms with what it had done before and during the war. In the early months of the Occupation, Douglas MacArthur and other U.S. authorities resisted Australian and British suggestions that the Emperor be put on trial as a war criminal. The American theory was that the Emperor could be more useful on the throne than in the dock. No doubt this was the right choice. But the Occupation policy was subtly different from a forgive-and-forget approach. In practice the policy was an agreement simply to forget the preceding decade of the Emperor's life, and to decree a version of history in which he had always been a mild-mannered marine biologist wringing his hands disconsolately as the evil militarists went wild.

Because the country was so poor after the war, and above all because of the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the prevailing view among the Japanese was that the moral slate concerning the Emperor and themselves had been wiped clean. It was time to move on, rather than to look backward at unpleasantness or wallow in guilt. As Field says, "The difficulty of discussing war guilt in general and of imperial responsibility in particular produced a national amnesia that first mobilized a labor force for stupendously hard work and then facilitated the transition to unreflective prosperity."

The question of war responsibility, like the nature of the Emperor's disease, was barely discussed while he lay waiting for death. Around this period Norma Field was visiting three people who in varying ways were challenging the rules, trying to remind their countrymen of issues that had officially been declared closed. Most of the book consists of Field's profiles of these three, who in modest, unflamboyant, but completely iron-willed ways were determined to stand up for their beliefs.

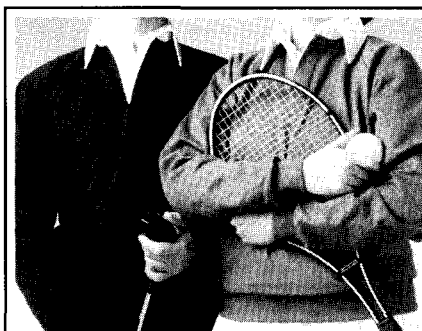
THE FIRST is Shoichi Chibana, a supermarket owner in Okinawa, who in 1987 burned the Japanese flag during a national sports meet in Yomitanson, a village on Oki-

nawa. The act was extraordinary, for reasons different from those that would apply in the United States. The rising-sun Japanese flag is not quite the object of mass veneration that the Stars and Stripes has become. It would be surprising to see it flown outside someone's house, and many groups consider it a symbol of militarism. Still, to burn it is shocking, and the impact was compounded by the disturbance of a large, very formal ceremony. "To create an awkward moment is a sin in Japan," Field says. "To cause disruption puts one beyond the pale." Chibana paid a high price for his moment of defiance. He was put on trial for flag-burning, through which the government apparently hoped to establish the flag's official status. The trial was still dragging on when Field completed her book, but Chibana had been ostracized by many in his community, had received threatening letters from the Japanese right wing, and saw his supermarket business fall off for a while.

Field tries to unravel Chibana's motives, through a series of flashbacks about what the war and its aftermath meant to Okinawa, especially in its relationship to the rest of Japan. Okinawa, with the other Ryukyu Islands, had been an independent kingdom before it was conquered and absorbed by Japan. Since then its status has been roughly similar to Puerto Rico's relative to the United States. Legally Okinawans stand on equal footing with other Japanese, but economically, educationally, and socially they do not. People in Okinawa still talk about "the Japanese" as if they were a separate nationality. "The reversion of Okinawa [from U.S. control] to Japan in 1972 effected only telling variations on the motif of inferiority," Field says.

Prostitutes had to shift their attention from American GIs to the construction workers descending from the mainland [that is, the main islands of Japan] for a succession of projects that were to bring the trappings of Japanese prosperity to the islands. . . . 'Blue skies, blue seas' became the Homeric epithet for Okinawa in travel posters. Pineapple, sugar cane, and easy—that is, dark—women; tropicality, relative undress, pleasure, and second-class citizenship.

The most disturbing part of the Okinawan complaint is the widespread be-



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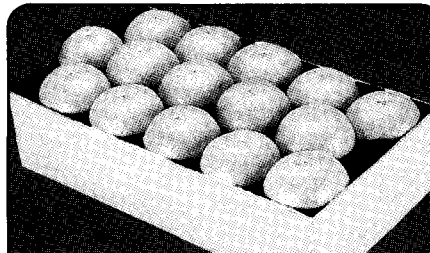
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lief that Japanese commanders chose Okinawa as the place to make their major stand against the Americans in April of 1945 knowing that horrific suffering would be inflicted on civilians. By burning the flag, Chibana meant to commemorate one particularly gruesome episode that reflected the wartime mentality of Japan—and had been covered up as part of the country's "war amnesia."

On April 1, 1945, as the Americans began their invasion, 140 Okinawans, mainly women and children, hid in terror in a cave near the village of Yomitan. They had been led to expect that the Americans would behave mercilessly when they took charge. American soldiers came to the cave and, through an interpreter, told the villagers that they would be safe if they left the cave. "That no one could believe this message was the immediate cause of the tragedy about to take place," Field says. Eighty-two of the people in the cave, including forty-seven children, then perished, in an act described as *shudan jiketsu*, or "collective suicide." A mother drove a knife through her teenage daughter's neck, so that she could die while "she was still pure." An army nurse injected her whole family with poison. "Many others begged her to inject them, but she refused, saying she had just enough for her own family and relatives," Field says.

Memories of the cave episode were generally suppressed after the war, Field says. When mentioned at all, it was supposed to be regarded as a Masada-like demonstration of commitment and iron will. (Field points out that the many Japanese soldiers who killed themselves rather than submit to capture are officially recorded as cases of *gyokusai*. Dictionaries render this term as "death for honor," but the characters that make it up literally mean "shattering jewels.") Field argues that it should instead be seen as an episode of "compulsory group suicide," because of the many pressures operating on the families in the cave. These included the Japanese army's threats to kill any stragglers who got in the way, and above all the ideology that citizens could never do enough to prove their loyalty to the Emperor. Shoichi Chibana paid his price because he wanted to have the episode remembered as a tragedy, as part of a more honest view of the war as a whole.

THE SECOND profile is of Yasuko Nakaya, a middle-aged widow who waged a long and ultimately futile legal struggle over the separation of Church and State. Her husband had been a member of Japan's postwar Self-Defense Force, the ambiguous army-like entity whose very existence seems contrary to the Japanese constitution. (The famous Article IX of the constitution says, "Land, sea, and air forces will never be maintained." Japan gets around this contradiction by saying that no matter what is in a constitution, a nation cannot give up its inherent right to self-defense. Thus the armed force is always referred to as the *jieitai*, literally "self-defending force," rather than the *gun*, or "army.") The Self-Defense Force, or SDF, is ignored by the public at large, but Japanese right-wingers have deeply divided feelings about it. The postwar constitution, which was imposed by Americans and led to Japan's current semi-army, "is for conservative Japanese a grating symbol of the unmaning of their nation," Field says. Some of this feeling of dishonor spills over onto the SDF. But at the same time, some conservatives see the military as the remaining vessel of national self-respect. Therefore they are always looking for ways to improve its now shaky public image.

Nakaya's husband was killed in 1968, in a traffic accident while on SDF business. Soon afterward the veterans' organization that maintains religious-patriotic Defense-of-the-Nation Shrines for Japan's war dead inscribed his name on a shrine as a *mikoto*, a spirit that has been "apotheosized," because he died in the defense of his country. Nakaya, who is part of Japan's tiny Christian minority, argued that having her husband's name appropriated by another religion disturbed her religious peace of mind. (The husband himself had not been a Christian.) Moreover, she argued that the apotheosis of SDF members, though not technically carried out by the state, blurred the Church-State distinction. In effect it was a step toward the wartime system of "State Shinto," in which death for the Emperor was the highest religious act. After many years of appeals, and increasing social ostracism of Yasuko Nakaya, the Japanese supreme court rejected her claim, by a 14-1 vote.

In telling this story Field evokes

several background themes. One is the awkward position of Christianity in Japan, which seems grating to many Japanese because it has been associated with social climbing, and also because of its insistence that people who are Christians cannot be anything else. Most Japanese participate in different religions at different stages of their lives, typically being baptized and married in Shinto ceremonies and buried as Buddhists. "Such habits produce a tolerance that contains its own intolerance, for an exclusive faith such as Christianity necessarily seems aberrant and at best, gracelessly rigid." Field also explains why the right wing views the maintenance of the shrines, and the homage to *mikoto* like Mr. Nakaya, as crucial to the maintenance of martial values. Yasuko Nakaya, like Shoichi Chibana in Okinawa, suffered widespread public condemnation after challenging the military. Her appearance surprises most people who have read about her intransigence, Field says, because she looks like a mild-mannered matron. Yet she has refused to give up.

THE THIRD CASE, best known outside the country, involves the mayor of Nagasaki, Hitoshi Motoshima. During the Emperor's deathwatch Motoshima was almost the only official to raise the issue of war responsibility publicly. He hazarded the view that if the Emperor had forced the Cabinet to accept surrender several months earlier, the battle of Okinawa might not have been fought and Hiroshima and Nagasaki might not have been bombed. Like Nakaya, the mayor made his point politely and deferentially—but refused to back down. Hate mail and death threats poured in from right-wingers (although, soon after the Emperor's death, he began to receive letters of support from all over Japan). Motoshima was forced to convert his residence into a fortress. A month after the police stopped guarding him—and a year after the Emperor's death—he was shot by a right-winger. Motoshima, who was then nearly seventy, survived the wound, and continued to express his views about the war.

Field traveled to Nagasaki to meet the mayor, and includes a long and lively transcript of her interview. Motoshima cites a passage from *All Quiet*

on the Western Front, in which Erich Maria Remarque says that people who went to war as adults and had a life to return to would eventually think of the war as just a bad dream. "But for those who went in as adolescents, who sacrificed their youth to the war—they wouldn't be free of the war as long as they lived," Motoshima says. "That describes me."

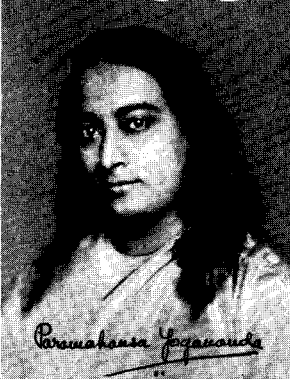
Although Field has lived her adult life as an American, she seems to feel at home in Japan. She is at ease with the customs and the language. More important, she feels entitled to judge and criticize as if it were her own country, without constantly looking over her shoulder or worrying whether she is being insensitive or unfair in not dwelling on its strengths. She doesn't feel obliged to say, or apparently even to think about, whether conditions in Japan are better or worse than those anywhere else. She has confined herself to discovering, and conveying with clarity and beauty, things as they are. □

Brief Reviews



FOOLSCAP by Michael Malone. Little, Brown, \$19.95. Mr. Malone's novel is basically the old tale of the fellow who starts out from dreary circumstances, encounters and, with the help of a supernatural mentor, survives outrageous adventures, and ultimately finds true love and a pot of gold. On this antique foundation the author has erected an amusing, satirical, marvelously convoluted modern structure inhabited by characters of Dickensian gaudiness. Theo, the hero, is a melancholy professor at a boondocks university ambitious to raise its status. In this setting Mr. Malone has a fine time with scholarly eccentricity and departmental backstabbing. The non-supernatural mentor who maneuvers Theo out of there is a garrulous, drunken, womanizing Texas wild man who happens to be the greatest living playwright in the

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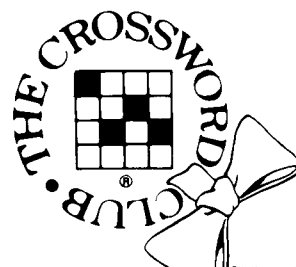
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Myths About Israel and the Middle East (2)

Should we re-examine endlessly repeated clichés?

In a previous installment in this series of clarifying messages about Israel and the Middle East, we examined certain myths which, by dint of constant repetition, had acquired currency and acceptance. We looked at the myth of "Palestinian nationhood", the myth of the Gaza Strip and Judea/Samaria (the "West Bank") being "occupied territory", the myth that Jewish settlements in these territories are "the greatest obstacle to peace", and the myth that Israel is unwilling to "yield land for peace". And we cleared up the greatest myth of all, namely that Israel's administration of the territories and not Arab determination to destroy the state, is the root cause of the conflict between the Arabs and Israel. But these are not all the myths; there are more.

What are some of these myths?

■ **Myth:** The Arabs of Israel are a persecuted minority without civil and political rights.

Reality: The 700,000 non-Jews (mostly Arabs) who are citizens of Israel have the same civil rights that Jews have. They vote, are members of the Knesset (parliament), and are part of Israel's civil and diplomatic services. Arabs have full access to the Israeli legal, health and educational systems, including Arabic and Moslem universities. The only difference between the "rights" of Arabs and Jews is that the Jews must serve three years in the military and at least one month a year until age of 50. The Arabs have no such obligation. For them, military service is voluntary. But, very few avail themselves of the privilege.

■ **Myth:** Israel should give up Judea and Samaria (the "West Bank") because strategic depth is meaningless in this age of missiles.

Reality: Israel is a mini-state – about half the size of San Bernardino county in California. If another, even smaller mini-state were carved out of it, Israel would be totally indefensible. That is the opinion of 100 retired U.S. generals, and admirals as conveyed to the President of the U.S. If the Arabs were to occupy whatever little strategic depths Israel has between the Jordan River and its populated coast, they would not need any missiles. Artillery and mortars would suffice, since Israel would be only nine miles wide at its waist. Those who urge such a course either do not understand the situation or have a death wish for Israel.

■ **Myth:** If Israel would allow a Palestinian state to arise in Judea/Samaria and in the Gaza Strip it would be a democratic state and would be totally demilitarized.

Reality: There is no prospect at all that anything resembling a democratic state

could be created. There is not a single democratic Arab state – all of them are tyrannies of varying degrees. Even today, under Israeli administration, the PLO, the Islamic fundamentalists, and other factions fight for supremacy and ruthlessly murder each other. A country torn apart by civil strife like Lebanon is likely to be a much better prospect. As for demilitarization, it is totally unlikely that – with Syria, Iraq, Jordan and Saudi Arabia, all of which are in a declared state of war with Israel at its borders – a power vacuum would be possible. Despite pious promises, the arms merchants of the world would find a great new market and the neighboring hostile Arab countries would be happy to supply anything else that might be needed.

■ **Myth:** Israel should make "confidence building" gestures for the sake of peace.

Reality: What really is it that the world expects Israel to do for the sake of peace? Twenty-one of the 22 Arab countries consider themselves in a state of war with Israel and don't even recognize its "existence". That has been going on for over 43 years. Wouldn't it be about time that the Arabs made some kind of a "gesture"? Could they not for instance terminate the state of war? Could they not finally abolish the economic boycott against Israel that has been in place for over 40 years – long before Israel came into the administration of the "West Bank"? Could they not stop the yearly charade of attempting the expulsion of Israel from the United Nations? Could they not withdraw that slanderous resolution ramrodded about 16 years ago through the General Assembly of the United Nations that Zionism, the liberation movement of the Jewish people, is racism? Any single one of these would be such a "gesture", but none is forthcoming.

It appears likely that, sometime quite soon perhaps, the parties to the Mid-East conflict – Israel, the Arab nations, and the Arab residents of Judea/Samaria and the Gaza Strip – will finally get together in a peace conference. And chances are that all the old clichés will be trotted out, all the old myths resurrected in order to pressure Israel to make "concessions". Israel is America's staunchest ally and certainly its only true ally in that area of the world. It is in our national interest that stark reality, not myths, govern any peace negotiations.

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English-speaking theater. The adventures involve a female Elizabethan scholar who is also a ramshackle householder and a terror on the highway; a couple of elegant document forgers, a lost work by Sir Walter Raleigh, English gentry tipsily a-romp at Henley, theatrical quarrels and contretemps, and a rural vicar with a collapsing church. Mr. Malone gives full value to each of these items. All his plot actually requires, for example, is a stupid clergyman in charge of a decrepit building, but the Reverend Brakeshaw is developed, with malicious glee, into a wonder of self-assured asininity. Because the author gives similar attention to every aspect of his story, this fine and funny novel should not be read in haste. If it is, the reader will miss jokes, references, and even subtle but significant clues, which would be both a loss to the reader and an insult to the author's wit and skill.

A WOMAN, A MAN, AND TWO KINGDOMS by Francis Steegmuller. Knopf, \$23.00.

Madame d'Épinay was an eighteenth-century French aristocrat with liberal views and a worthless husband. The Abbé Galiani, a very small man of enormous charm and learning, was a minor diplomat in the service of the Kingdom of Naples. Posted to Paris, he fell in with such leading intellectuals as Diderot and Voltaire and eventually with the equally intellectual Madame d'Épinay. The two became good friends (strictly friends), and when Galiani was whisked back to Naples for professional indiscretion, they began a correspondence that lasted as long as Madame lived. Mr. Steegmuller has drawn on these and other letters for a beguiling re-creation of life among progressive thinkers in the years before the French Revolution. They teased and gossiped, reported events like a disastrous Parisian fireworks display, and considered matters from political theory to potatoes. The ideas of those people remain interesting and often provocative, and they themselves emerge as unquestionably attractive.

TAXI FROM HELL by Vladimir Lobas.

Soho, \$20.95. Mr. Lobas, a Soviet émigré, was working in New York as a Russian-language broadcaster when he got a toothache. As the necessary dentist proved beyond his immediate

means, he sought a moonlighting job as a taxi driver. His ignorance of New York City, the English language, and the driving of cars was no impediment. He was hired. His memoir of his experiences covers rivalries among drivers, bribery of hotel doormen, habitual illegal procedures, and other less pleasant activities, but it is interesting for its backstage view of both immigrant attitudes and a peculiarly isolated segment of society. It will also inspire a certain wariness among cab riders.

SEAROAD by Ursula K. Le Guin. HarperCollins, \$20.00. Ms. Le Guin chronicles four generations of women in the town of Klatsand, a former lumber camp developed into a modest summer resort on the Oregon coast. The women are permanent residents in the sense that despite travels and marriages they always drift back to Klatsand, where they constitute something like a dynasty of officials and entrepreneurs. The male characters are a poor lot—caddish lovers, thick-headed husbands, unpleasant neighbors and business partners. Good men are either dead or permanently ineligible. If the author has small use for her male characters, she loves Oregon coastal scenery and describes it so superbly that waves and wind and rain become part of her cast. The book never becomes strident in its sexual bias, but it has to be considered a feminist novel for its presentation of a self-sufficient female society.

MEN AND WHALES by Richard Ellis. Knopf, \$40.00. It cannot be known when or where whaling originated, but it appears that everything else about the trade can be known and that Mr. Ellis, a marine artist as well as a writer, has tracked down all the facts and assembled them in this (no, no, resist the temptation) very large book. He begins with descriptions of the various species of whales and proceeds to a history of whaling, which turns out to involve far more than just the hunting of the animals. Small wars have been fought over whaling rights; whalers have influenced and contributed to polar exploration and international trade; cities have prospered and declined with the rise and fall of whaling fleets. In chapters called "Interludes," Mr. Ellis discusses topics such as Melville's *Moby-Dick* and its effect on the general

perception of whales, whalebone as an adjunct to fashion in hoopskirt and corset, and life aboard a whaler as recorded in ships' logs and maritime memoirs. He has observed, and describes well, modern whaling wherever it is still practiced—a venture that must have been painful to such a whale lover as he clearly is. The vast amount of information contained in Mr. Ellis's book is well arranged and illustrated, his maps are useful, and readers with any interest at all in whales should find the work rewarding.

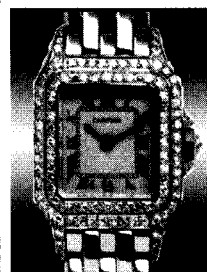
THE "NATURAL INFERIORITY" OF WOMEN compiled by Tama Starr. Poseidon, \$16.00. This collection of quotations might reasonably be titled *The Natural Paranoia of Men*, for most of it illustrates the male sex's habit of blaming its own follies of aggression and self-indulgence on women. Some of the quotations are barbarous, some are ludicrous, and some—regrettably—are unfair. Ms. Starr has quite enough material from grumpy ecclesiastics and nervous psychiatrists without lifting lines from Iago and Dorian Gray out of contexts in which they have a different, even contrary, meaning. The editor has been highly industrious in assembling her androphobic ammunition, but not overparticular about its type.

SHADE THOSE LAURELS by Cyril Connolly, concluded by Peter Levi. Pantheon, \$20.00. The late Cyril Connolly left a partly written murder mystery that has been completed by his friend Mr. Levi, to whom he had confided its projected denouement. As a whodunit the work is far from first-rate, but as an exercise in style, in erudite conversation, in learned quotation and paraphrase, in evocative description and esoteric information, it is a bravura display. As one character says, "not a shrimp is peeled without a dissertation, not a sparrow falls to the ground without a post-mortem. . . ." So much space is in fact devoted to food, poisonous and otherwise, that it seems excusable to describe the work as caviar to the general.

A HISTORY OF ENGLISH IN ITS OWN WORDS by Craig M. Carver. HarperCollins, \$22.95. A number of the etymologies in this book first appeared in the *Atlantic* column Word Histories.

—Phoebe-Lou Adams

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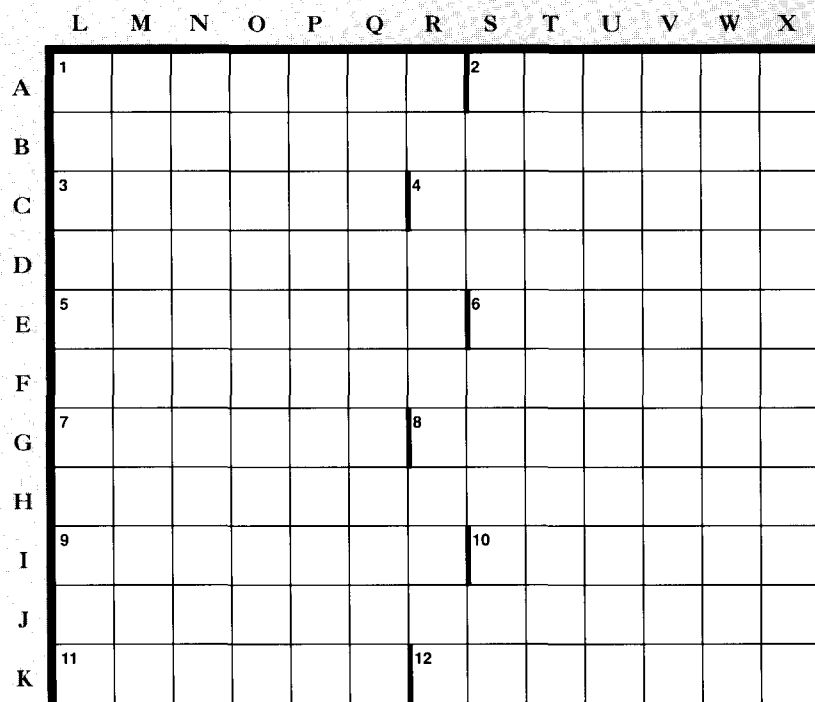
THE PUZZLER

BY EMILY COX AND HENRY RATHVON

KNIGHT'S MOVES

Across answers 1–12 are entered in the diagram normally. The 26 Knight's Move answers are accompanied by coordinates indicating their beginning and ending squares (AL, for example, being the upper left corner), and they are entered in the diagram in L-shaped jumps, the way a chessboard knight moves: each letter after the first jumps two squares in one direction before landing in a third square to one side. When the diagram is completed, the central Across row will reveal a two-word phrase suggesting the activity of knights. Answers include three proper nouns.

The solution to last month's Puzzler appears on page 144.



ACROSS

1. Knight boy in discomfort (7)
2. Way to fight knight at first—with a charge (6)
3. Look for tip of Green Knight's weapon (6)
4. Words cited about one cross knight (7)
5. Pawn has got moved by error (7)
6. Was a king heartlessly checked? (6)
7. Prizes damsel in distress (6)
8. Some hag arranged ceremonies of lords and vassals (7)
9. Parades horses around church (7)
10. Laugh about feudal worker coming back again (6)
11. Queen keeps quiet, in a morass (6)
12. Duly heartless, cruel succession of kings and queens (7)

KNIGHT'S MOVES

- AL-BW** Show knight's servant one stab (9)
- AN-DP** Tough king holding the club (8)
- AP-JO** Pawn's topside damaged (7)
- AR-DX** Knight circles king in corner (4)
- BP-AW** Love entering fair fight like a knight (5)
- BR-DV** Makes smoother chessboard rows (5)
- BS-FQ** Practice knight's back fall (5)
- CP-GO** Unscathed raiment cloaks bishop's throne (8)
- DL-BU** Armored fighter's withholding the first of his grateful words (6)
- DO-KP** Jump in chess shows pressure (5)
- DX-KV** Kay, seen returning with Grail, finally prepares to be knighted (6)
- EQ-JV** A horse brought back around the heart of the country (5)
- ES-IT** Top of castle, mostly French (4)
- EX-GX** Pawns used stealthily, capturing bishop at last (5)

- FW-IU** Approach in fine armor (4)
- FX-KX** What a horse might pull three feet to the left (4)
- GL-HV** Initially, Ivanhoe landed in army sick of war (8)
- GT-AX** Win a chess game with one great move (7)
- GV-IU** Middle Ages army lacking my equipment (4)
- IN-DM** Battering device split castle's defense (7)
- IW-EO** Knight at the Round Table tossing citronellas (11) (*two words*)
- JN-DV** Shaking an ax helps formations of shield-bearers (9)
- JS-KW** Arthur, after Camelot's end, is sour (4)
- JT-KR** Ran into stable door (4)
- KO-FT** Bond restraining one Crusader, e.g. (7)
- KR-AR** Grayish horse has gone out part of a castle (7)

NOTE: The instructions above are for this month's puzzle only. It is assumed that you know how to decipher clues. For a complete introduction to clue-solving, send an addressed, stamped envelope to The Atlantic Puzzler, 745 Boylston Street, Boston, Mass. 02116.

WORD HISTORIES

Etymologies derived from the files of the Dictionary of American Regional English

BY CRAIG M. CARVER

cop

"Jerry Garcia and everyone else in the band certainly don't want to be *cops*," Dennis McNally, the publicist for the rock band The Grateful Dead, said in an interview, "but they had to do these things if they were going to be able to keep playing." McNally's comments referred to steps the band had taken to quell unruly



crowds at concerts. Popular explanations of the origin of *cop* have been around almost as long as the word itself (1859). One of these holds that it is an acronym for "constable on patrol" or "constabulary of police" or even "chief of police." (Whichever, the idea is that the acronym would have gained currency from policemen's adding C.O.P. after their names on official reports.) According to another popular etymology, *cop* is shortened from *copper*, because the uniforms of the London police had large copper buttons—or, alternatively, had star-shaped copper shields. *Cop* is indeed a shortened form of *copper*, but not the *copper* that refers to a metal. Instead, it is a noun that evolved from the verb *cop* (to capture, nab), meaning "one who cops"—that is, one who captures. *Cop* itself is probably from the Dutch *kapen* (to steal) or perhaps from the related Middle French *caper* (to seize). *Cop* is ultimately from the Latin *caupo* (tradesman); the sense development would have been "trader" to "buyer, to buy" to "buy unfairly" to "take, seize, steal." This Latin word also gave us the English *cheap*.

fiasco

"DODGERS MAUL METS IN A 4-HOUR *FIASCO*"—thus did the *New York Times* sports page characterize a loss by the lackluster Mets last July. A *fiasco* is a dismal failure, and the word was originally used in the theater to describe a play or musical that struck out. It originates in the Italian expression *far fiasco*, literally "to make a bottle" or "to make a flask." Explanations for the development of the meaning "failure" from "make a bottle" are various. One involves the Bolognese actor Domenico Biancolelli, who, in an appearance as Arlecchino—that is, a harlequin—around 1681, improvised a soliloquy on the subject of a flask that he was holding. The improvisation failed, and the resourceful Biancolelli addressed the flask, saying: "It's your fault if I sound like a beast this evening!" Whereupon he tossed the flask over his shoulder. Thereafter, whenever an actor bombed, he would say, "I got Arlecchino's flask." Another explanation starts with the idea that a *fiasco* is not just any bottle but the long-necked, round-bottomed



kind of wine bottle that cannot stand upright without a plaited-reed base. This could have yielded the sense "something that cannot stand on its own." A final theory for the origin of *far fiasco* involves Venetian glassblowers, who, if they found a flaw in an elaborate piece they were working on, did not discard it but instead made it into a common bottle or flask.

bogus

The decisive American victory in the Gulf War was sullied when the United States abandoned Kurdish insurgents after having encouraged them to rebel against Saddam Hussein. General Norman Schwarzkopf, in a news conference, tried to put the matter into perspective. "It's important to remember that this [Kurdish] rebellion has been going on for many, many years," he said. "To somehow imply that the rebellion just started, to somehow imply that because we did not continue for one more day the attack, that the rebellion did not succeed, is *bogus*." The

history of *bogus* (spurious, a sham) is uncertain. James Russell Lowell believed that it derives from the French *bagasse*, which refers to the detritus of sugarcane after the juice has been expressed; the word for this worthless product would

then have been applied to other worthless or spurious things. Another explanation involves a supposed swindler with the Italian name *Borghese*. The most commonly accepted explanation is that *bogus* is from the name of a curious-

looking machine that made counterfeit money early in the nineteenth century ("He never procured the casting of a *Bogus* at one of our furnaces"—*Painesville [Ohio] Telegraph*, 1827), the money itself soon coming to be called *bogus*. This *bogus* may be a version of *tantrabogus*, and a note in the *Oxford English Dictionary* cites a communication from an American noting that *tantrabogus* "was commonly applied in Vermont to any ill-looking object." *Tantrabogus* is itself a variant of the English dialectical *tantrabobus* or *tantarabobus*, a name for the devil and probably related to *bogey* (devil, goblin, bugbear).



Search High



16 mg. tar
1.1 mg. nic.



14 mg. tar
1.0 mg. nic.



16 mg. tar
1.1 mg. nic.

Search Low.



5 mg. tar
0.4 mg. nic.



4 mg. tar
0.4 mg. nic.



4 mg. tar
0.4 mg. nic.



3 mg. tar
0.3 mg. nic.

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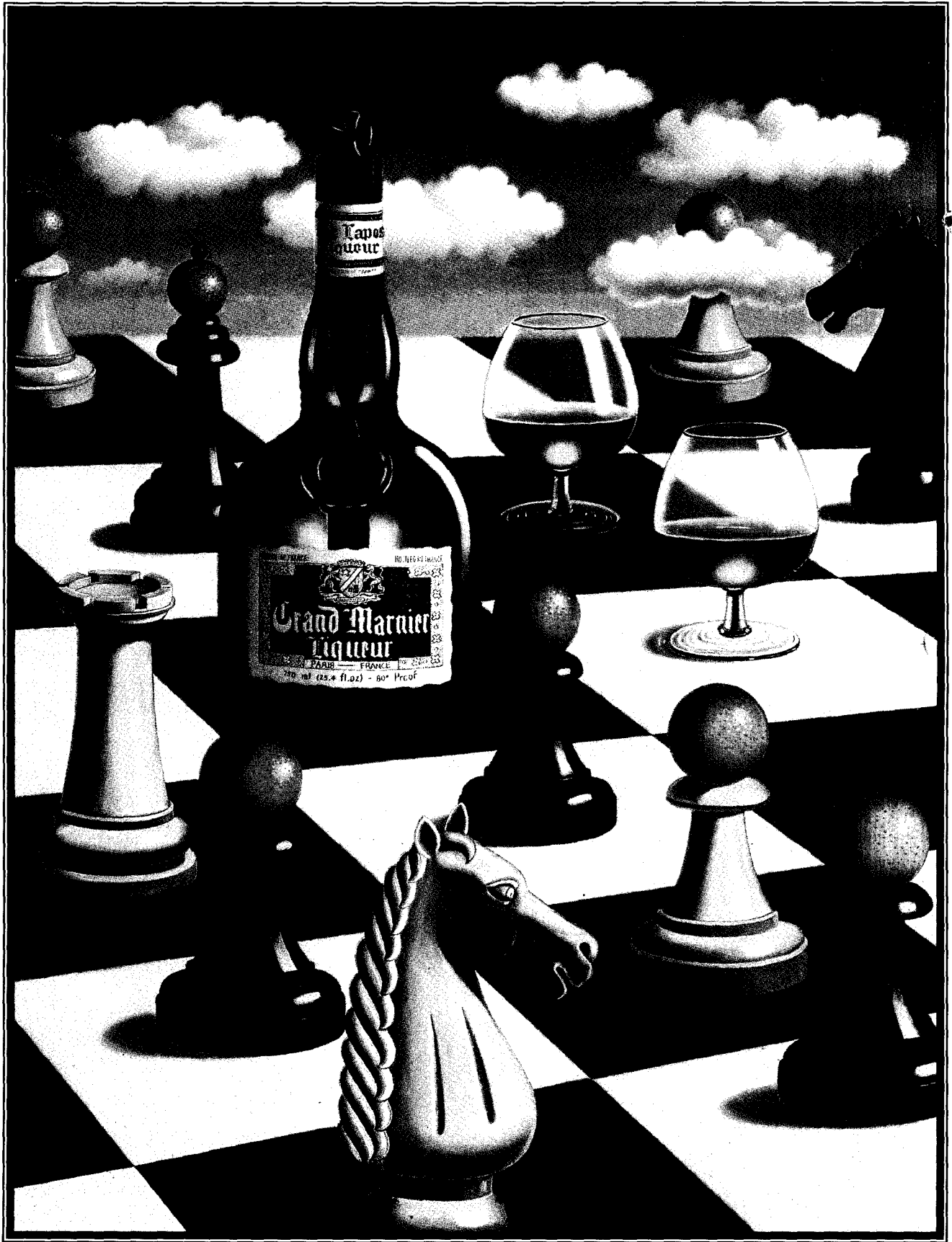
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